LOHMAN'S

SURPRISE BANJO METHOD,

A PERFECT SELF INSTRUCTOR, WITHOUT NOTES.

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THE fundamental principle of learning to play upon a musical instrument is to begin exactly right; or, in other words, to start from a correct foundation. When this has been done, it will be found that the most rapid progress can be made, as nothing will be in the path—no bad or useless habit will exist to be *unlearned* before further advancement is possible.

Hence it is that LOHMAN'S SURPRISE BANJO METHOD enables the student to not only start aright, but permits him to ignore much that has been heretofore included in alleged "Instructors," "Methods" or "Systems" as altogether worthless and to proceed, in an almost incredibly short space of time, to actual playing—a few days being all that is sometimes required to develop the necessary facility and celerity in the manual manipulation of this most popular and pleasing instrument, and we know that when the lessons have been thoroughly practiced, according to instructions, the student who possesses a fair ear for music will be able to play easy pieces and to "pick" out a good accompaniment *without any other teaching whatever*.

It will be noted that the musical staff is absent from our Surprise Methods for any instrument for the very simple reason that it is not needed; notes are also omitted for the same reason. It is not desirable to *require* that an elaborate course of musical notation and thorough bass be taken, at considerable expense and occupying a good deal of time, when our Surprise Methods will teach one to play good music accurately in a short time.

No one can acquire any degree of musical education without a natural ear for music, even with years of study. If this gift *is* possessed by a given 500, not more than *one* of them can afford the time and expense to learn everything by note from the start, *but*, with our Surprise Methods the other 499 can become *fair performers in a very short time*, and if found desirable to afterwards study notation, very much less time and effort will be found necessary than would be the case if our Surprise Methods had not been previously mastered.

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PART FIRST.

LESSON 1.

WHAT IS THE BANJO?

The Banjo occupies its own peculiar place among the leading musical instruments of the world and belongs to the class of stringed instruments, at the same time possessing a most distinct individuality. It is, like all other devices for producing musical sounds, an evolution, as it has existed in a crude form in its African home for some centuries.

It consists of two principal parts—the drum and neck. It is generally strung with five strings, four of them being composed of gut and one, the A, of silk wound with silvered wire. This is called the bass string.

It is played with the right hand while the left hand fingers the strings along the fingerboard, above which they extend, thus permitting the fingers of the *right* hand to call forth the desired tones at will.

WHAT THE BANJO IS USED FOR?

The Banjo is a versatile instrument and popular as both an accompaniment to the voice or another instrument and also for solo work. Its tightly strained head, to which is conveyed the vibrations of the strings when being played, furnishes a sustaining and carrying quality which is most pronounced, adapts it to a variety of uses not enjoyed by any other instrument of its class, as furnishing ludicrous effects and producing unbounded merriment and harmless fun, as well as real pleasure, it is believed to be unequaled.

RULES FOR ADJUSTMENT.

A careful observance of these rules will enable the student to maintain his Banjo in good order and always ready to respond to his demands.

1. See that the drum or shell is firmly joined to the neck; that the head fits smoothly over the edge of the shell and that the rim bears equally all around. The brackets must not be loose and should fit the rim perfectly.

2. The saddle or nut, of hard wood, bone or ivory, should be notched evenly and deep enough so the strings may not slip and to permit them to be carried only the thickness of a heavy cardboard above the first fret.

3. The bridge should be of similar material, the notches of proper depth and evenly divided and not so high as to raise the strings too far above the finger board, else fingering will become tiresome. When the bridge and saddle properly adjust the strings above the fingerboard, and are in accord with these rules otherwise, rapid execution will be easy and the tones clear and pleasing.

4. The tailpiece is a very important adjunct to the Banjo and much besides simply holding one end of the strings depends upon it. If not very firmly attached to the shell the bridge (which is only held in place upon the head by the pressure of the strings) will cause endless trouble and this annoyance detracts not only from the pleasure of playing but seriously impairs the tone of the finest Banjo. We may be excused, in the interest of musicians, for stating here, that our Banjo tailpiece, upon which we have been granted a U. S. patent entirely prevents trouble of any kind and is no more expensive than the ordinary useless article.

5. The frets on the fingerboard permit the strings to be shortened by pressing them against the frets, thus raising the tone. The finger should touch the string *near to* but just back of the fret, holding it firmly until the tone has ceased.

The frets must be properly divided, else the intervals between the tones will not be correct.

GENERAL RULES.

The sounds which are provoked and caused to issue *from the Banjo* by vibrating its strings will vary in quality as the materials composing it are judiciously selected and put together and properly finished; but the expression with which it is played is also of paramount importance.

The performer must first see to it that all parts herein mentioned are well made and in correct position—no part should be loose in the slightest degree, else imperfect tones will result—and the proportions, distances, etc., exactly right. If the neck is too thin to withstand the strain put upon it by tuning the strings to "concert pitch," the tones will not be full, even and of equal strength as to high and low notes.

NOTE.—An instrument is said to be in "concert pitch," or up to "concert pitch," when tuned with a **C** or **A** pitch pipe or tuning fork, which are uniformly of correct standard pitch.

A similar imperfection will be noted if the strings are not of the right kind and size (see following lessons).

It is not generally known among performers that *every portion* of the Banjo contributes towards the production of the tones we hear when the strings are played, yet such is the fact. If they were attached at each end to some solid substance incapable of any vibratory motion—a solid rock, for instance—the act of playing the strings would cause sound waves to be imparted to the air and dull sounds would result, but no resonant, musical or pleasing tones could be presented. On the contrary, a Banjo made as we have indicated and adjusted as we have shown, is capable of a nicety of tone and a fullness of expression beyond an words of description.

This matter is noted here, so that students can better realize the great value of ke their instruments in good condition, and thereby enjoy with their friends the full m of perfect musical sounds in both melody and harmony.

The Banjo will be in order if these points have been observed, as other im details now require attention.

LESSON 2.

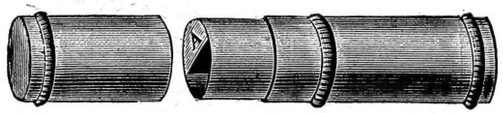
STRINGS—THE PROPER WAY TO STRING A BANJO.

The best results can only be expected when the best quality of strings are used. A fine instrument is never at its standard of tone when strung with cheap strings, while a fair Banjo will give satisfaction if the strings are of the first grade or quality and properly attached; besides, *good strings* prevent annoyance and constant trouble.

Banjo strings are of an entirely separate class or variety from any others, and are made especially for this instrument only, being no more adapted for a violin than violin strings are for a Banjo. We have known of hundreds of cases where ignorant or unscrupulous dealers have sold violin strings for use on a Banjo. Always decline such substitutes.

Difference in size and construction must be considered in selecting strings. Ordinarily, the first string, which must be of the best quality of selected gut, should not be heavier than No. 7 wire, but in some cases No. 6 or even No. 5 can be made to do very well. For the fifth or short string, one or two numbers finer will be found best. The second string, also of the best gut, should not be heavier than No. 8 or No. 9 wire, although No. 7 may be used. The third string, of same quality of gut, should be about the size of No. 10 wire, which is two or three points finer than an E violin string. The fourth or bass string should be of silk wound with silvered wire, and expressly made for the Banjo; it should be about the same thickness as the third string.

"A" TUNING FORK.



"A" TUNING PITCH PIPE.

As no two Banjos are alike, *a fixed rule* for the selection of strings for *every* instrument cannot be given. Test your Banjo with strings slightly varying in size, and finally adopt those which produce the best results and continue their use.

Cases may arise when it is desired to use a Banjo mostly in the open air. When this condition exists, steel strings made specially for the Banjo may be attached, in which case a patent head ought always to be put on the instrument.

With the best strings and the proper fixtures, as herein described, both player and instrument will merit a high reputation.

First, attach a string to the tailpiece. If our patent tailpiece for the Banjo is used, simply drop the knotted end into the slotted recess, carrying it forward *over* and *under* the curved projections, then on to the key to which it belongs, passing it through the hole and tightening the key partly until all the strings are in position, when tuning will be in order. Other tailpieces are more complicated, and some will have to be "learned" before stringing the Banjo. Carefully examine the tailpiece, and attach the strings according to its construction, and proceed as above.

TO TUNE THE BANJO.

As has been said, ordinarily the Banjo has five strings—the B or first, G sharp or second, E or third (treble strings), the A or fourth (bass string), and the short E or fifth string, called the thumb-string.

NOTE.—When instructed to hold a string "on" a certain fret, it must be understood that the string should be so held by placing the finger on the string *directly back of the fret*, so that nothing may interfere with its perfect vibration, which would be the case if the finger was placed *on the string* directly *over* the fret.

1. Tune the B or first string to the pitch of an A tuning fork, or to the pitch of an A tuning pitch pipe, by holding this string on the tenth fret.

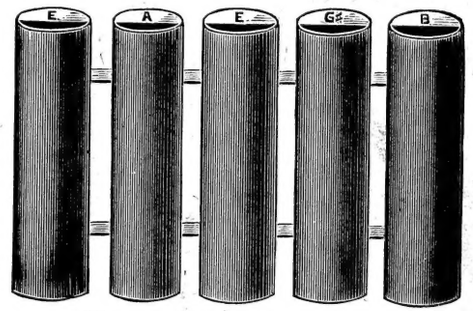
2. Tune the G sharp or second string by holding it on the third fret; it must then be tuned so as to have the same pitch or tone as the B or first string when played open.

NOTE.—A string is said to be "open" when not touched or fingered by the left hand.

3. Tune the E or third string by holding it on the fourth fret. It must then be tuned so as to have the same pitch or tone as the G sharp or second string when played open.

4. Tune the A or fourth string by holding it on the seventh fret. It must then be tuned so as to have the same pitch or tone as the E or third string when played open.

5. Tune the E or fifth string by holding the B or first string on the fifth fret. The E or fifth string must then be tuned so as to have the same pitch or tone as the B or first string.



COMBINATION TUNING PITCH PIPE.

The above instructions tune the Banjo to the standard pitch of A. To produce a more brilliant effect, this instrument is almost always actually tuned to a pitch which is one and a half tones higher, viz., C.

NOTE.—Illustrations of a tuning fork and tuning pitch pipe in standard key of A are here shown; also a cut of a combination tuning pitch pipe, which gives the pitch for EACH STRING. When the latter is used each string is tuned to the pitch of the pipe to which it corresponds.

As the standard pitch of all other instruments is A, we have shown exactly how to give the Banjo *that pitch*. To play it in C the student has only to substitute a C tuning fork or pitch pipe for the A in tuning the first string, and the pitch of his instrument will be C, by following the rules in paragraphs 1, 2, 3, 4 and 5, as above.

If it is desired to play with another instrument, or accompany the voice in any other keys, tune the first string to the pitch desired, and follow these instructions for the other strings. Never tune to a higher pitch than C, as the strings will be liable to break from too much tension.

LESSON 3.

HOW TO PLAY THE BANJO.

The position of the performer when playing should be easy and best adapted for resting the instrument and permitting free and unobstructed exercise of the muscles of the arms and hands, for, although the arms are not really brought into play, they should not be in any way cramped or the hands and wrists will not be under the most perfect control.

The performer should be seated in a chair or upon something of about the same height, with the left foot raised a few inches from the floor. A foot-rest or hassock may be used, if convenient, for this purpose. The right foot will be outward, and the instrument held in the lap and against the body at such an angle that the hands will at once assume the proper positions for playing. The right arm will assist in holding the drum in place and the entire *ensemble* afford a position at once natural and such as to facilitate rapid and easy execution.

THE LEFT HAND.

The fingers of the left hand control the pitch of the tones produced. The neck of the Banjo rests in that part of the hand between the thumb and the first finger—the wrist is slightly bent—that the *ends* of the fingers may fall upon and press the strings from a point directly above the fingerboard and at right angles with it. The fingers should never approach from the side, pressing the strings obliquely but with a direct movement from above.

Hold the strings firmly *just back* of the frets, which the finger must not touch, this allows free vibration between the bridge and the fret, against which the string should be held until it ceases to vibrate, when the time will permit.

Barrè chords are produced by pressing with one finger of this hand two or more strings to the fingerboard at any desired fret. The half Barrè chord is produced by pressing two or three strings to the fingerboard at any desired fret, with two fingers. As the Lessons progress these chords will be fully shown.

The work of the left hand in fingering is entirely different from the right hand, which plays the strings, causing them to vibrate and thus communicating motion (of a very slight character, it is true) to the entire instrument.

THE RIGHT HAND.

With the finger or fingers of the left hand just back of the fret on which the string is being firmly held, proceed to play those strings with the thumb and fingers of the right hand. Ordinarily the strings should be played from two to three inches from the bridge. Note the exceptions which follow.

BANJO STYLE.

This style requires the use of the thumb and first and second finger, as illustrated in Lesson 4. The strings are played near the bridge for the purpose of producing a more penetrating tone in rendering tunes where it is desired that the Banjo assume the leading part; also for stage purposes, when the air with which but few chords are demanded is played. In this connection it should be stated, that to cause a more forcible vibration of the strings in vigorous movements in stroke playing, a thimble is used on the first finger to permit the proper effect. This is the old style of playing many of the original plantation melodies.

GUITAR STYLE.

This is exemplified by bringing the thumb and the first three fingers into play. They should always approach the strings to be played from their sides with an oblique, downward pressure; this movement produces the best tones—pure and more perfect than can otherwise be accomplished. Great care should be taken in learning that the strings are not *lifted*; this motion always gives a most unpleasant "twang" and will destroy much of the pleasure of listening to an otherwise well played instrument.

In playing, the strings should be struck as indicated in the following lessons—first by the thumb, following with the first, second and third fingers (if the diagram indicates that all these are to be used) *almost* simultaneously, but allowing a small fraction of a second to pass between the touching of each string. This habit being acquired, an elegant style of playing will have been developed, the rotation of the sound of each string accomplishing an *instantaneous variation* which at once blends into one grand and perfect chord.

To draw the softest, mellowest and most soothing tones from the Banjo, the strings should be played near the point where the rim touches the fingerboard.

Should it be necessary to temporarily use wire strings, special instructions are involved. The slightest touch will cause them to respond, and only the tips of the fingers should be employed to play them. Performers accustomed to gut strings are extremely liable to attack wire strings too vigorously with most *un*musical results. The reason is in the difference of material of which they consist. By reason of its superior flexibility, the gut string recovers its original position in waves and indirectly. The steel string, on the contrary, recovers its position in direct lines, and if played with the same strength and vigor that will produce no unpleasant melody or harmony with gut strings, will emit a very harsh and discordant tone.

If properly played, steel wire strings may be made to give reasonable satisfaction to both hearers and performer.

Enough has been said in support of the assertion, previously made, that the Banjo was susceptible of great versatility, to establish the fact. In the hands of a master it cannot be surpassed by other instruments of its class, while the beginner, student and amateur will find many friends to entertain. The Banjo is calculated to be very serviceable, if fairly well made, and if the preceding instructions and rules are *strictly* followed as to strings and the other details of fixtures, etc., an ordinary instrument will last many years and furnish much good music, at the same time it ministers to a degree of enjoyment rarely furnished by any musical instrument.

These lessons would not be so far complete unless we referred to the occasional necessity of repairs. Should the Banjo, through accident or otherwise, require repairing, an instrument maker or other person who is *known* to be qualified should be consulted. A thoroughly competent person, only, ought to be permitted to make repairs or changes and many good instruments are hopelessly ruined by falling into the hands of some one wholly incompetent to do the work. Such service is dear at any price, while a person who knows his business and has all the conveniences and stock at hand, will never charge more for *good work*, than the *bungler* is pretty certain to endeavor to collect.

LESSON 4.

This lesson intimately relates to all of those which follow, and must be carefully studied so that the points covered are firmly fixed in the mind of the student. It contains the key to all succeeding lessons, and furnishes a practical solution of the "object lessons" (as a professional friend calls similar lessons in our Surprise Methods for other instruments), which form the balance of this work. Once mastered, they complete the foundation for all that is included in correct knowledge of Banjo playing.

THE LEFT HAND.

The upper section of the diagram—to the right on this page—shows the Banjo fingerboard with the strings attached; these are always known by the letters and numbers as given, and never change.

As seen in the upper portion of the diagram, and also at the 5th Fret, at which point the fifth or thumb string is attached to its key, the letters and figures **E, A, E, G♯, B,** (5TH, 4TH, 3D, 2D, 1ST,) represent the five strings of the Banjo as it is almost always strung. Below the figures, the white space represents the saddle or nut over which the strings pass—to the keys above and below over the frets—which appear in the diagram as white lines across the fingerboard, and are numbered 1st Fret, 2d Fret, 3d Fret, etc.

The black figures, **1, 2, 3** and **4,** standing in the large white dots on the fingerboard, exactly indicate where the 1st, 2d, 3d and 4th fingers must be placed so that the proper tones or chords shall be produced when these strings are played by the right hand.

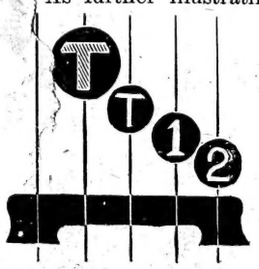
For Barrè positions in these lessons, where the parallel style is indicated, the white dot is elongated or extended so as to cover two or more strings, as may be required by the chord to be played.

THE RIGHT HAND.

The lower section of this diagram shows the strings at the point where they are to be played by the thumb and fingers of the right hand. The *white figures* or *letters* on the black dots on the strings in this section invariably instruct the student which to play to produce the desired tones, chord or harmony, whether in Banjo style or Guitar style of playing, the fingers being indicated by figures and the thumb by the white letter, both shown on the black dot.

Wherever this section of the diagram shows the *white letter shaded*, as seen in the cut annexed, it indicates that the string on which it is placed is to be *first* played as the bass note or tone in the chord.

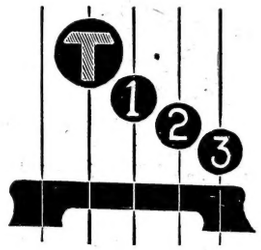
As further illustrating the Banjo style of playing, the subjoined cut will emphasize the reference made in the preceding lesson. The thumb first plays the bass string, on which the shaded letter T is placed, and, instantly passing to the 3d string, *plays it* at the same time the 1st and 2d fingers play the strings on which the black dot with white figures are placed, thus completing the chord.



The index or first finger is always 1, the second finger 2, etc.

Above each diagram in each lesson will be found a description of its character and of what the chord consists, and whether it is "minor," as some chords are called. The minor chords are introduced to give a greater variety, and their use often greatly assists in permitting the production of the most beautiful expression to a plaintive accompaniment, or in playing some tunes.

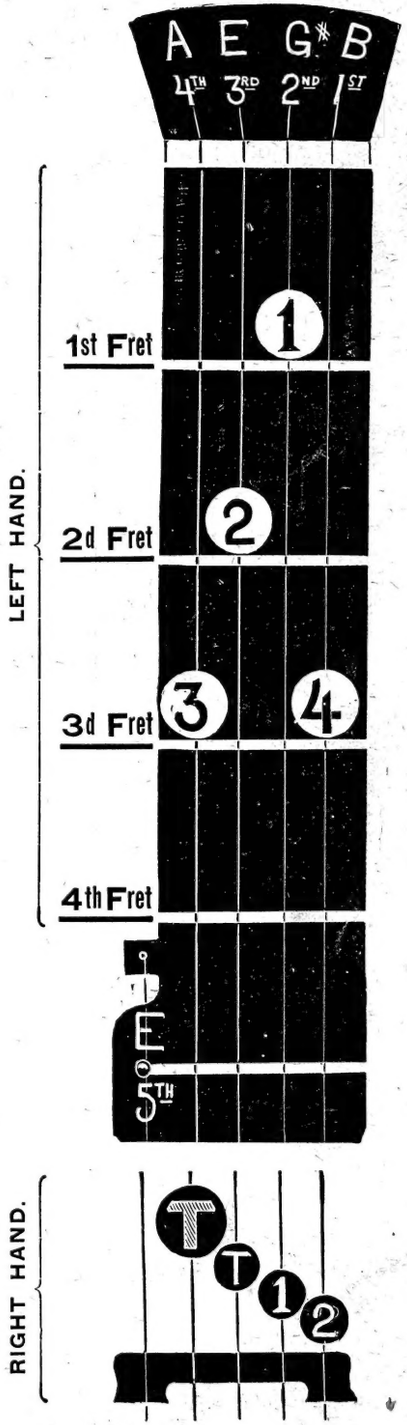
The Guitar style has been referred to in our Third Lesson. Explanatory of it we give the following cut, which shows the shaded T on the bass, and the 1st, 2d and 3d fingers on



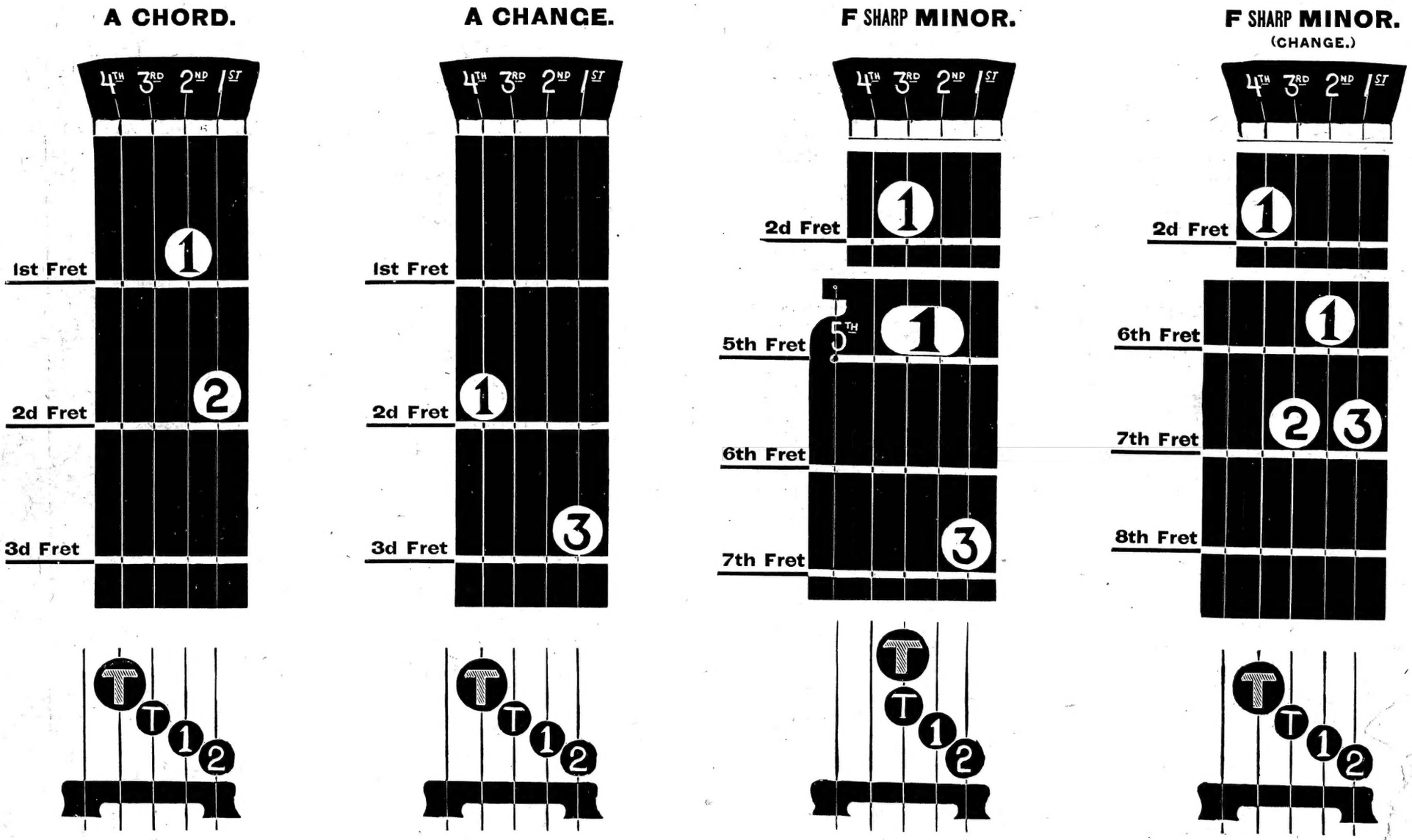
the 3d, 2d and 1st strings, respectively. In this connection we wish to remind the student of the previous instructions as to the playing of the strings *in rotation*; perfect playing can only be done when this style has been adopted.

GENERAL INSTRUCTIONS.

The ear may be ever so accurate, Lohman's Surprise Method in hand and a good instrument provided, but without practice the Banjo cannot be well played. A certain amount of dexterity and celerity and "touch" *must* be acquired, all depending upon muscular discipline. The lessons which follow provide so much and in such a simple form for purposes of practice that the student who will master every diagram, practicing each lesson forward and backward until he has them *thoroughly mastered*, will find he has developed a proficiency of execution otherwise unequaled, and which will fully satisfy him for the application given; at the same time he will be gratified and *surprised* at the remarkable progress he has made.



LESSON 5.

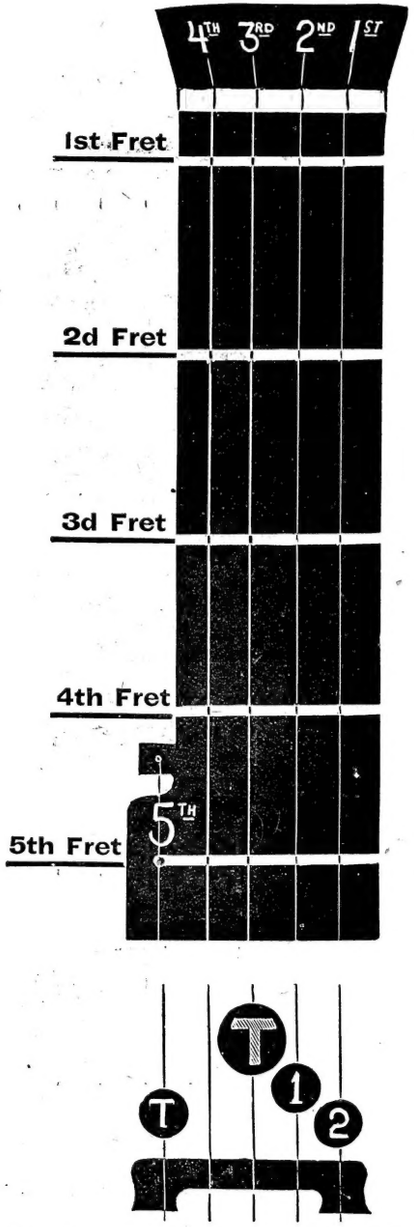


Practice these chords forward and backward until so familiar with all the positions that you can make the changes rapidly and accurately.

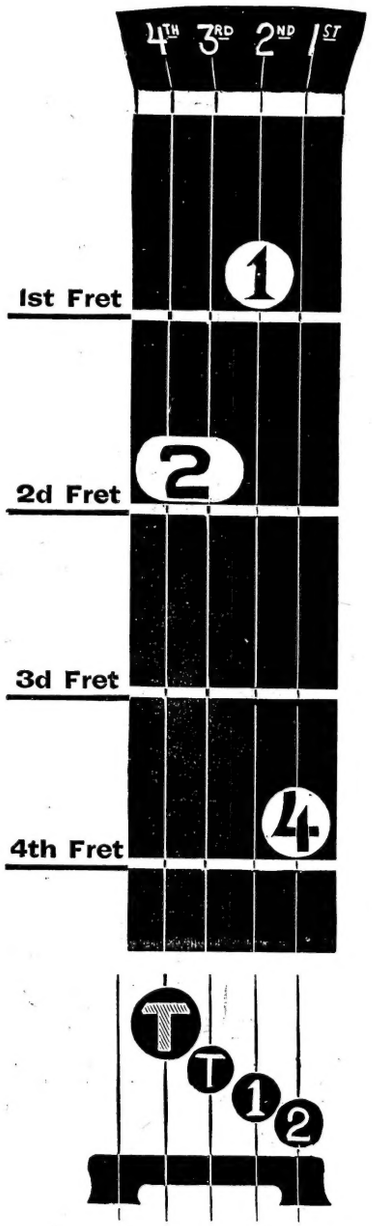
TO SECURE GOOD TONES, ALWAYS BEAR IN MIND LESSONS 3 AND 4.

LESSON 6.

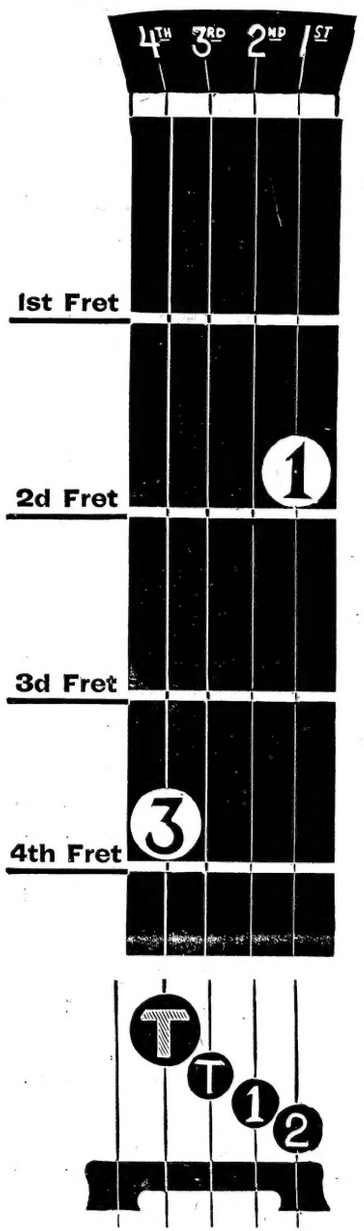
E CHORD.



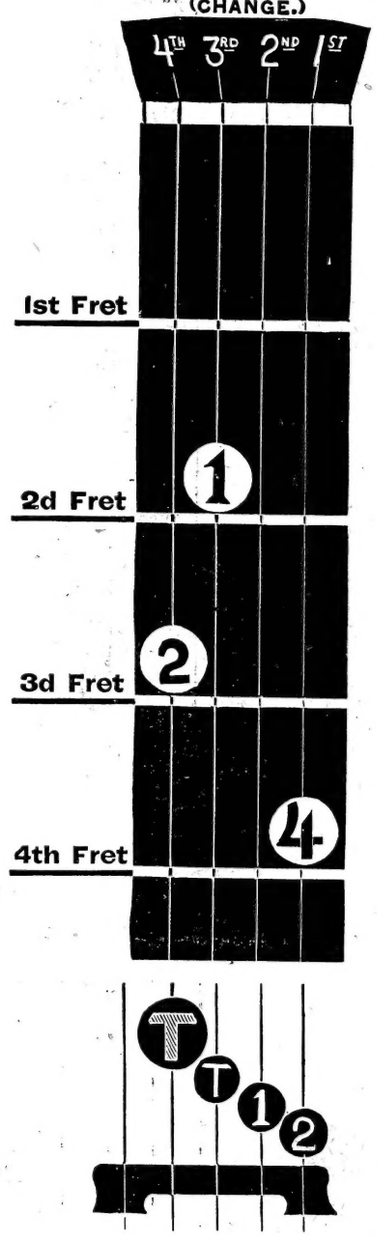
E CHANGE.



C SHARP MINOR.



C SHARP MINOR. (CHANGE.)



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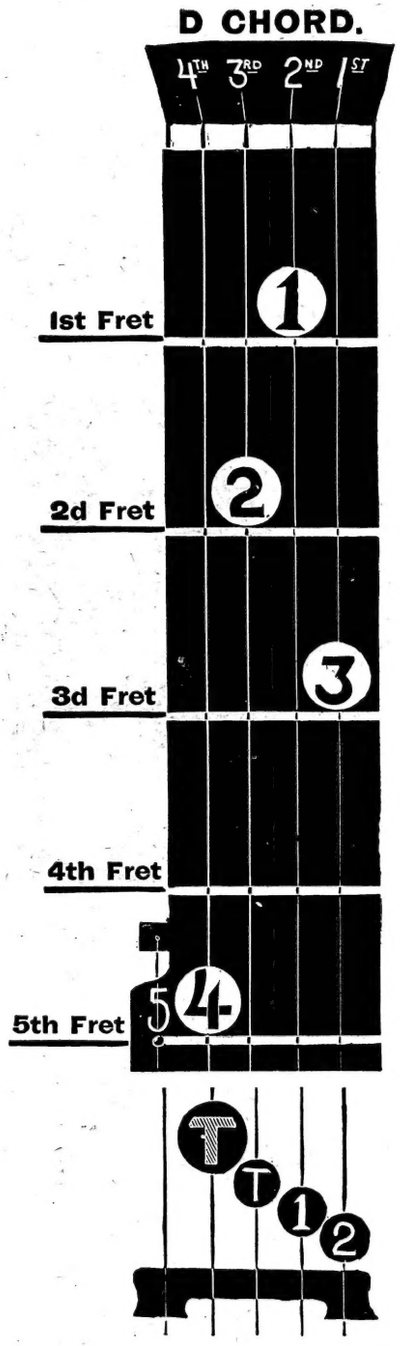
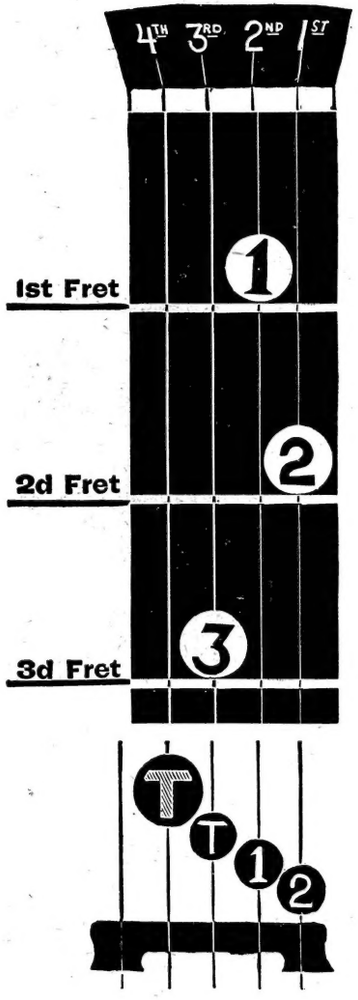
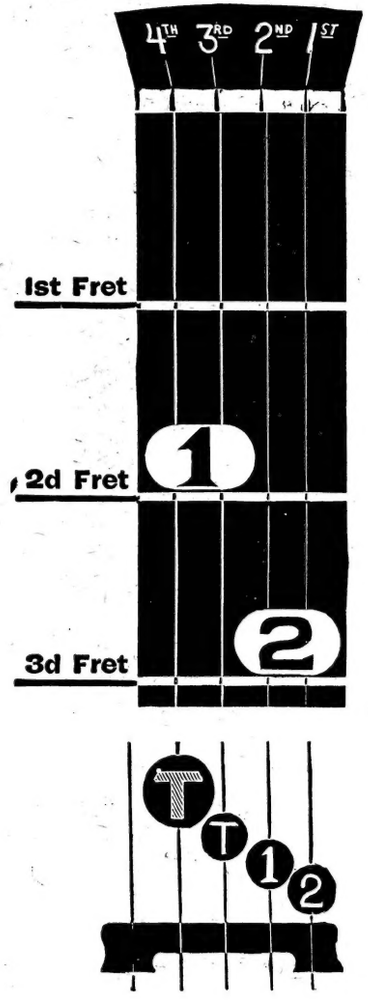
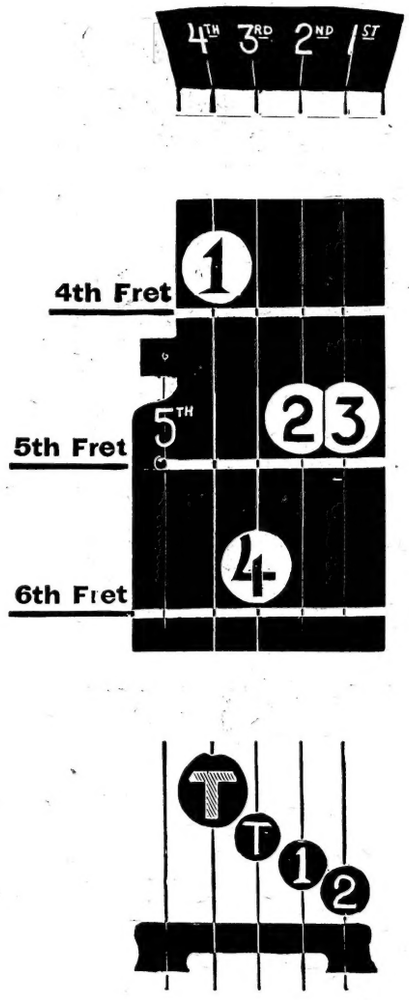
LESSON 7.









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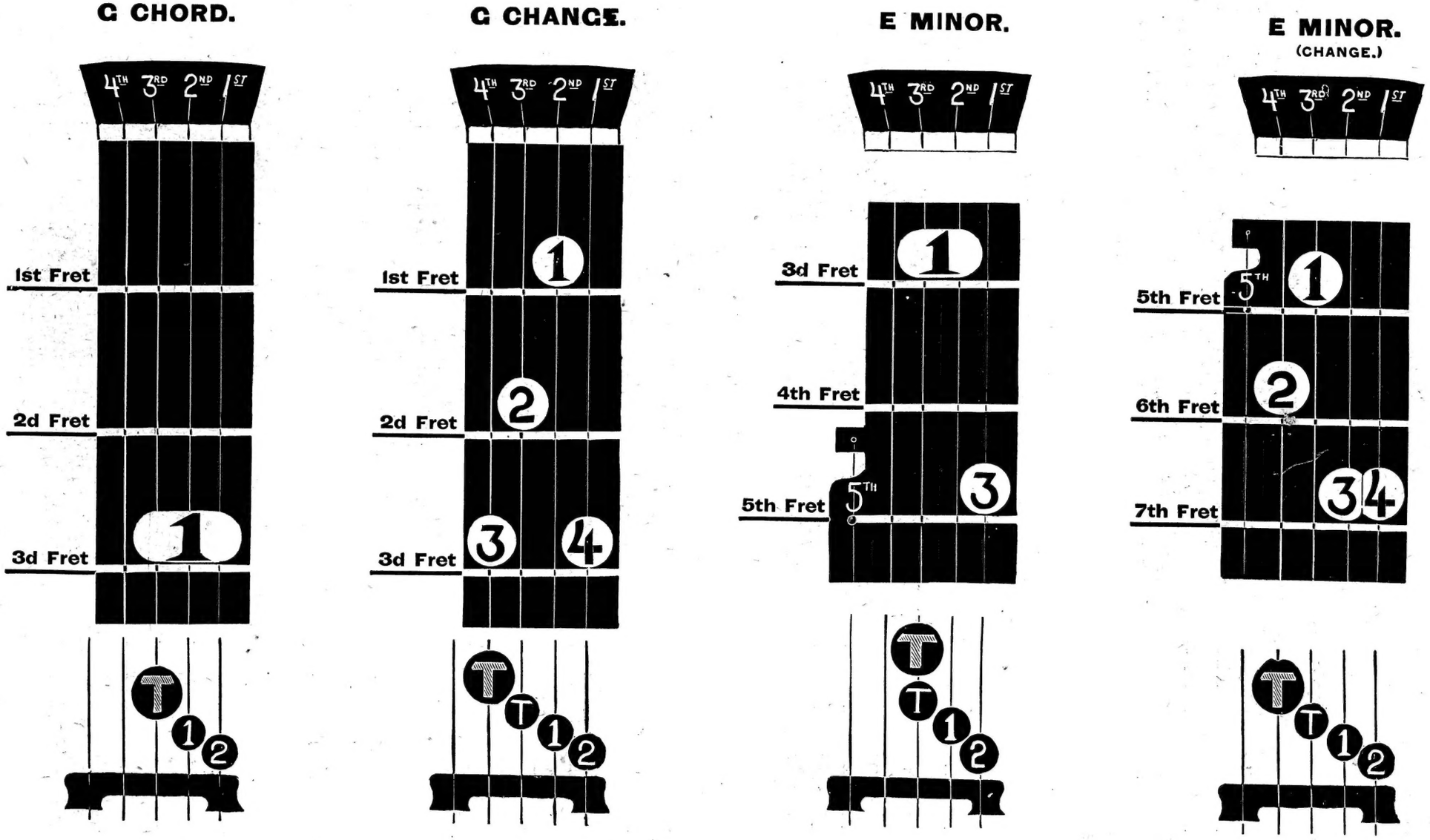
LESSON 8.



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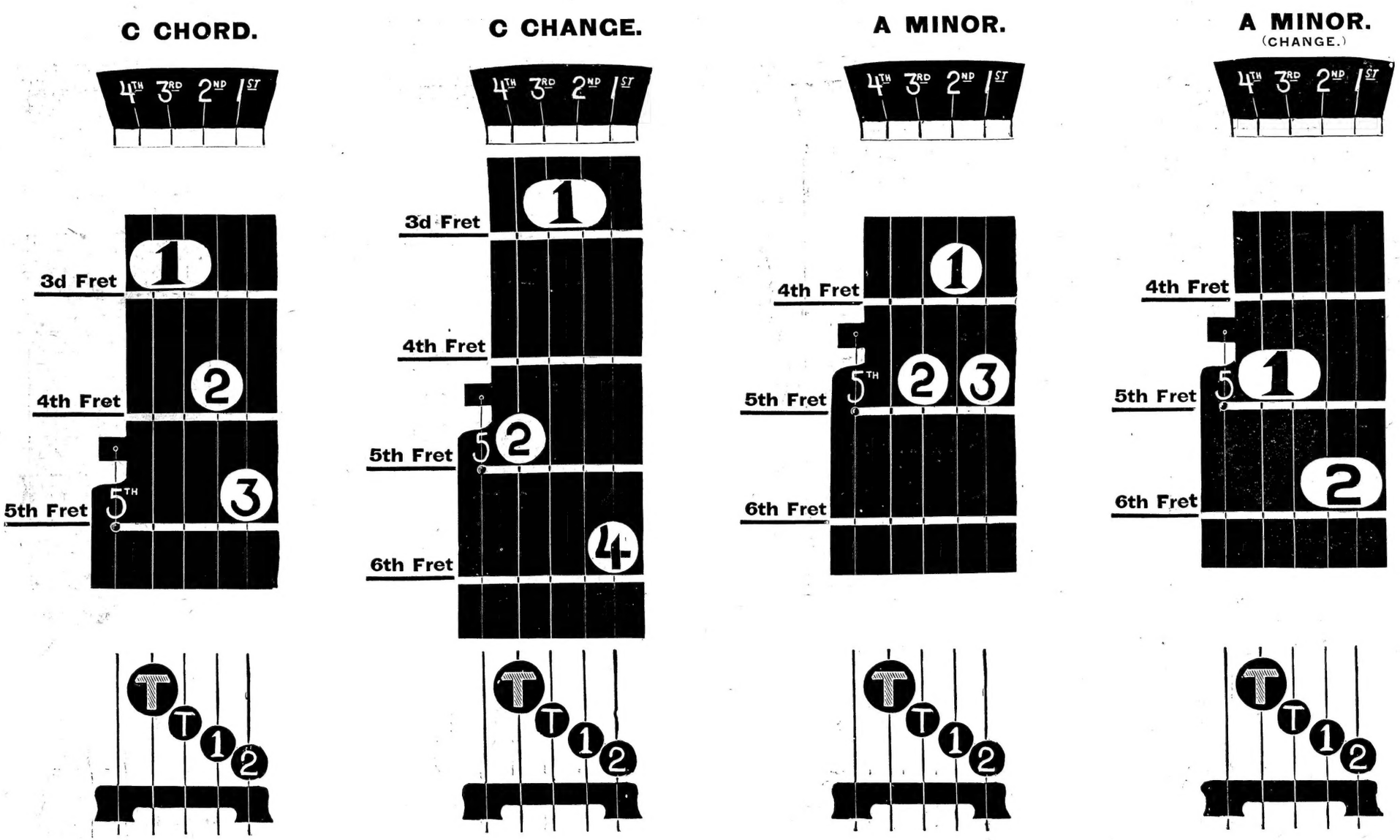
LESSON 9.



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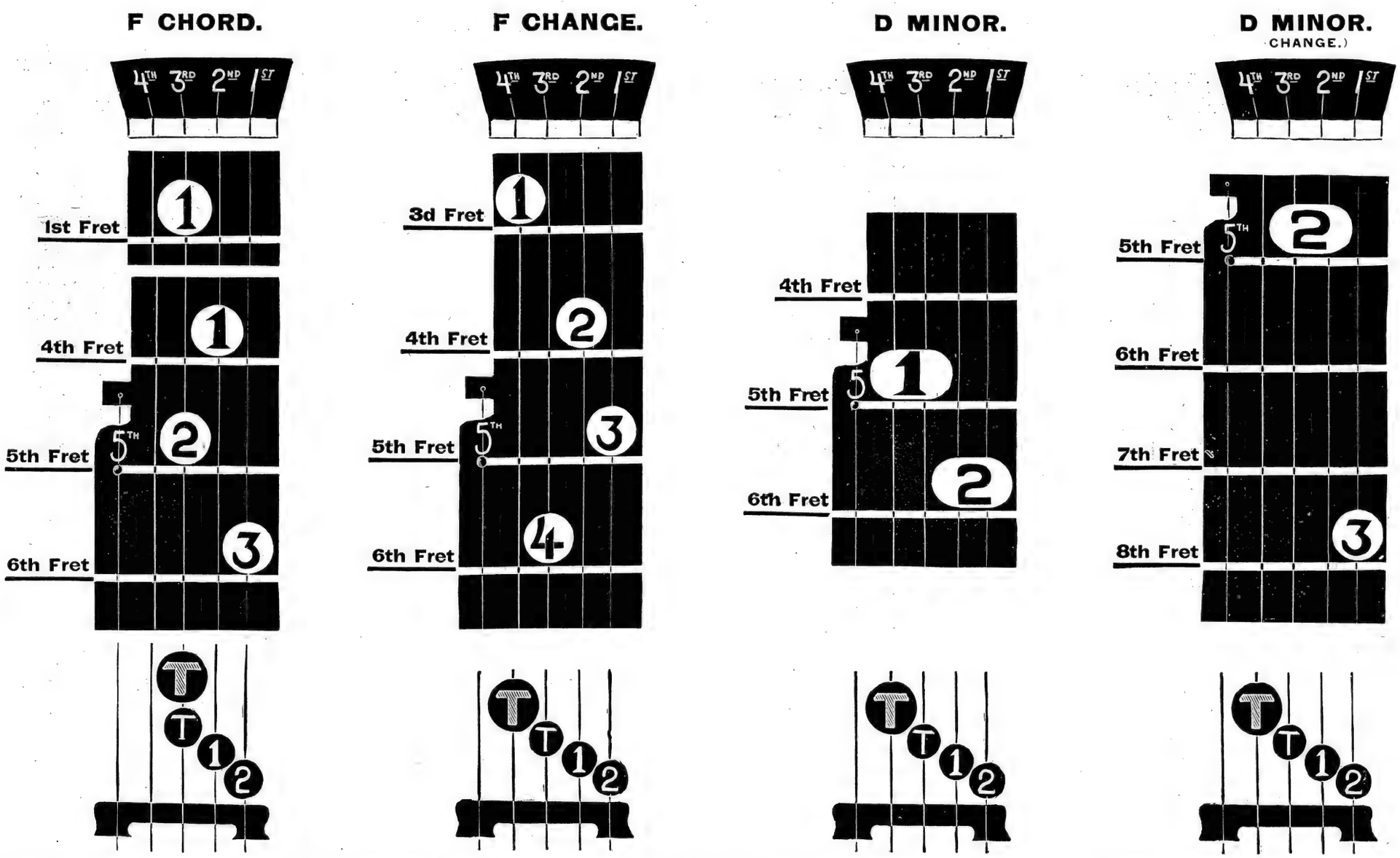
LESSON 10.



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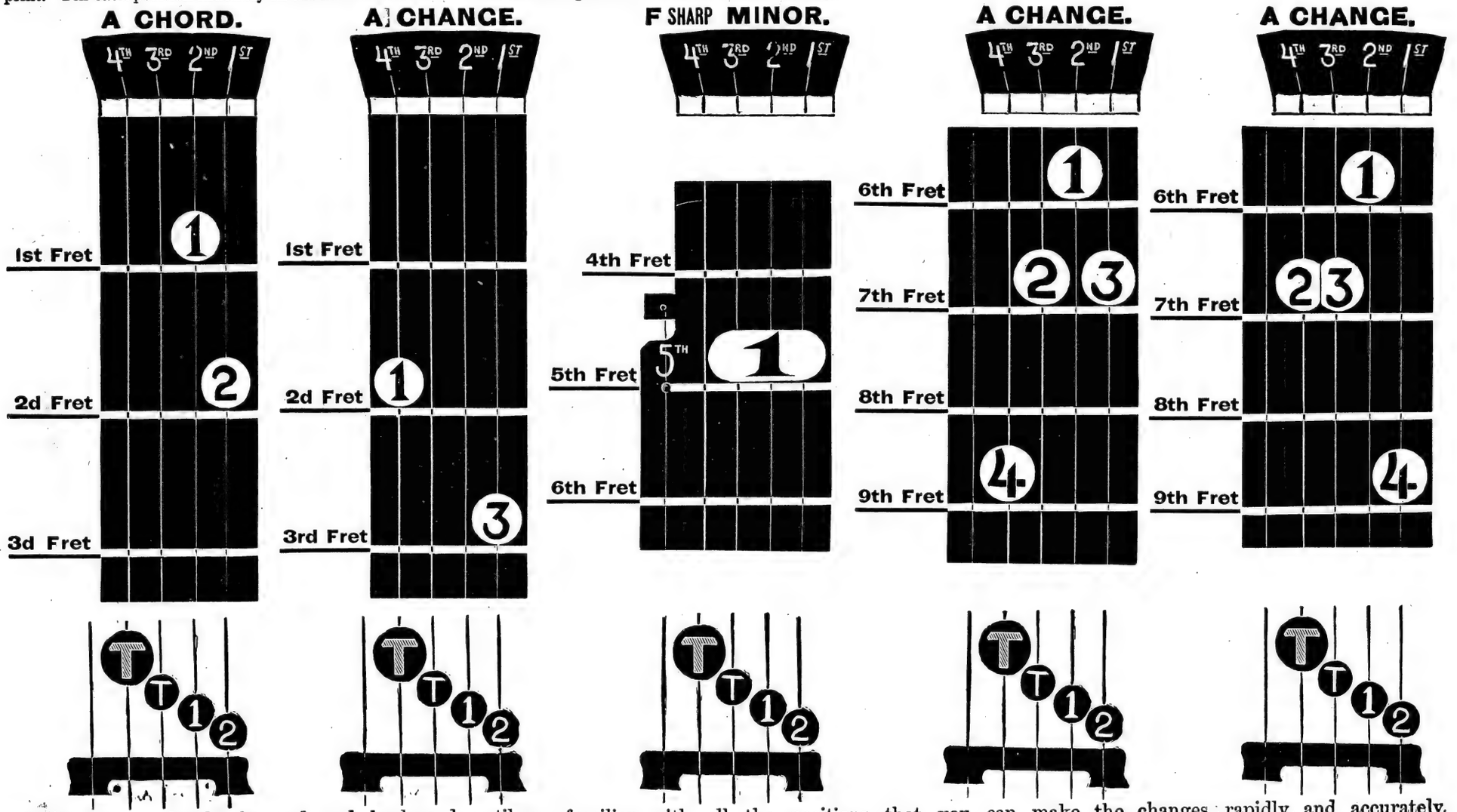
TO SECURE GOOD TONES, ALWAYS BEAR IN MIND LESSONS 3 AND 4.

PART SECOND.
LESSON 11.

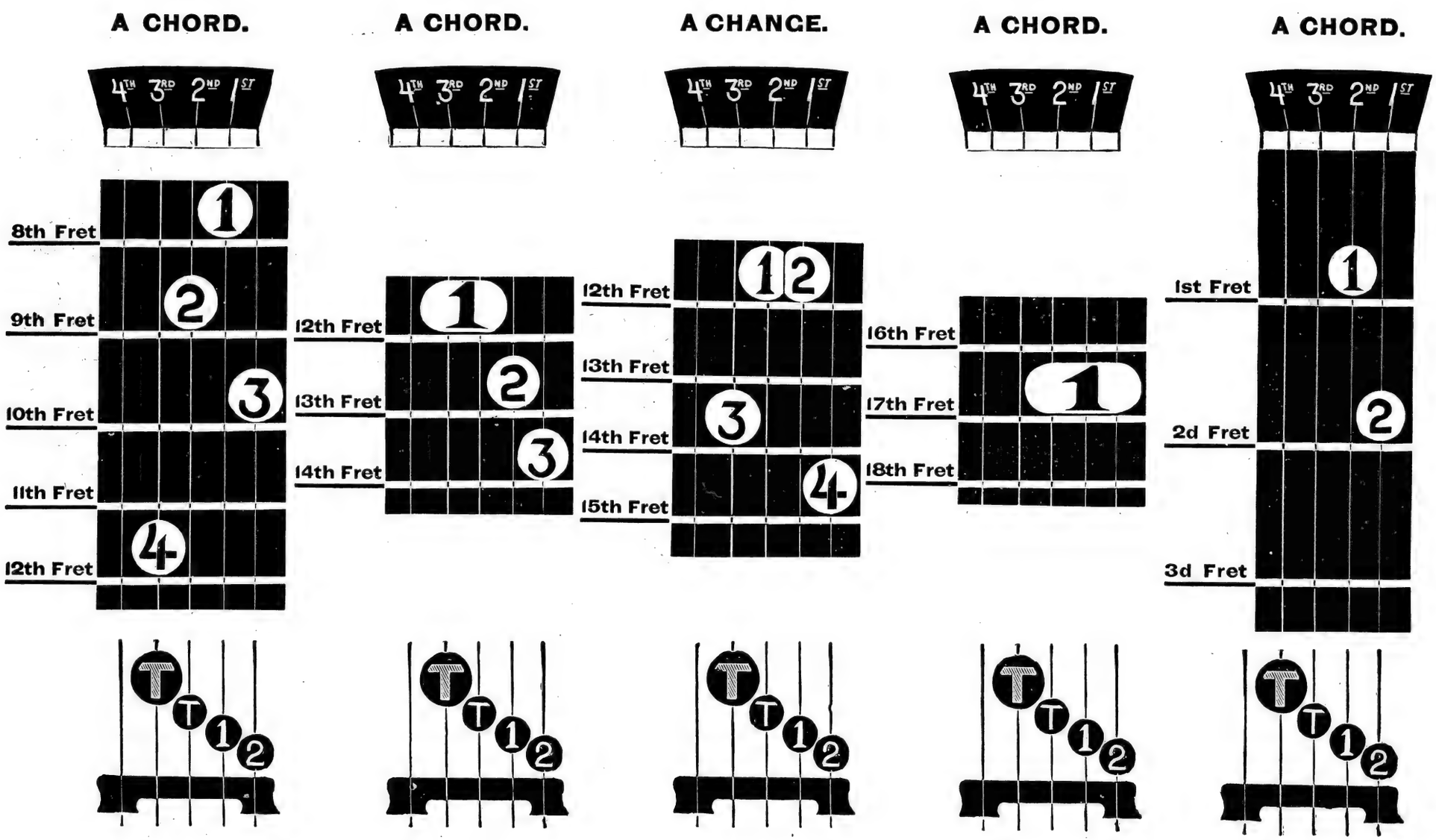
All the first part of this Method having been learned (and the student should not leave it, until most **thoroughly** familiar with every diagram), the higher positions and more complicated and unusual chords, as shown in this part, may be attempted. They furnish a solid foundation for lines of development in playing the Banjo, that permit and teach beginners—from their simplicity—and wonderfully assist advanced players, to a more matured grasp of the subject of comprehensive performance upon this instrument than have ever before appeared in print. Fix each position indelibly in the mind and follow the instructions given in the earlier lessons closely.



Practice these chords forward and backward until so familiar with all the positions that you can make the changes rapidly and accurately.

TO SECURE GOOD TONES, ALWAYS BEAR IN MIND LESSONS 3 AND 4.

LESSON 12.



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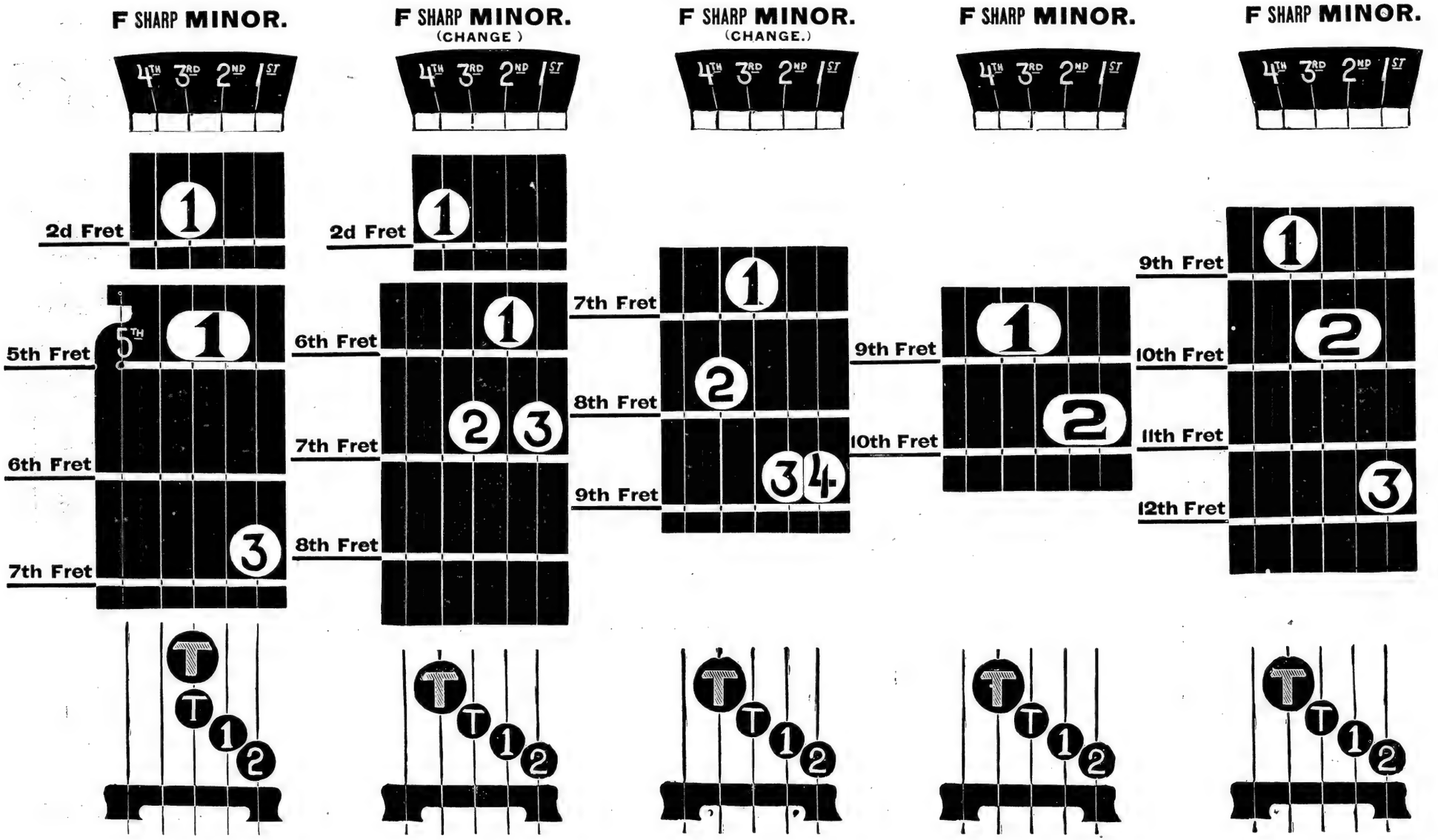

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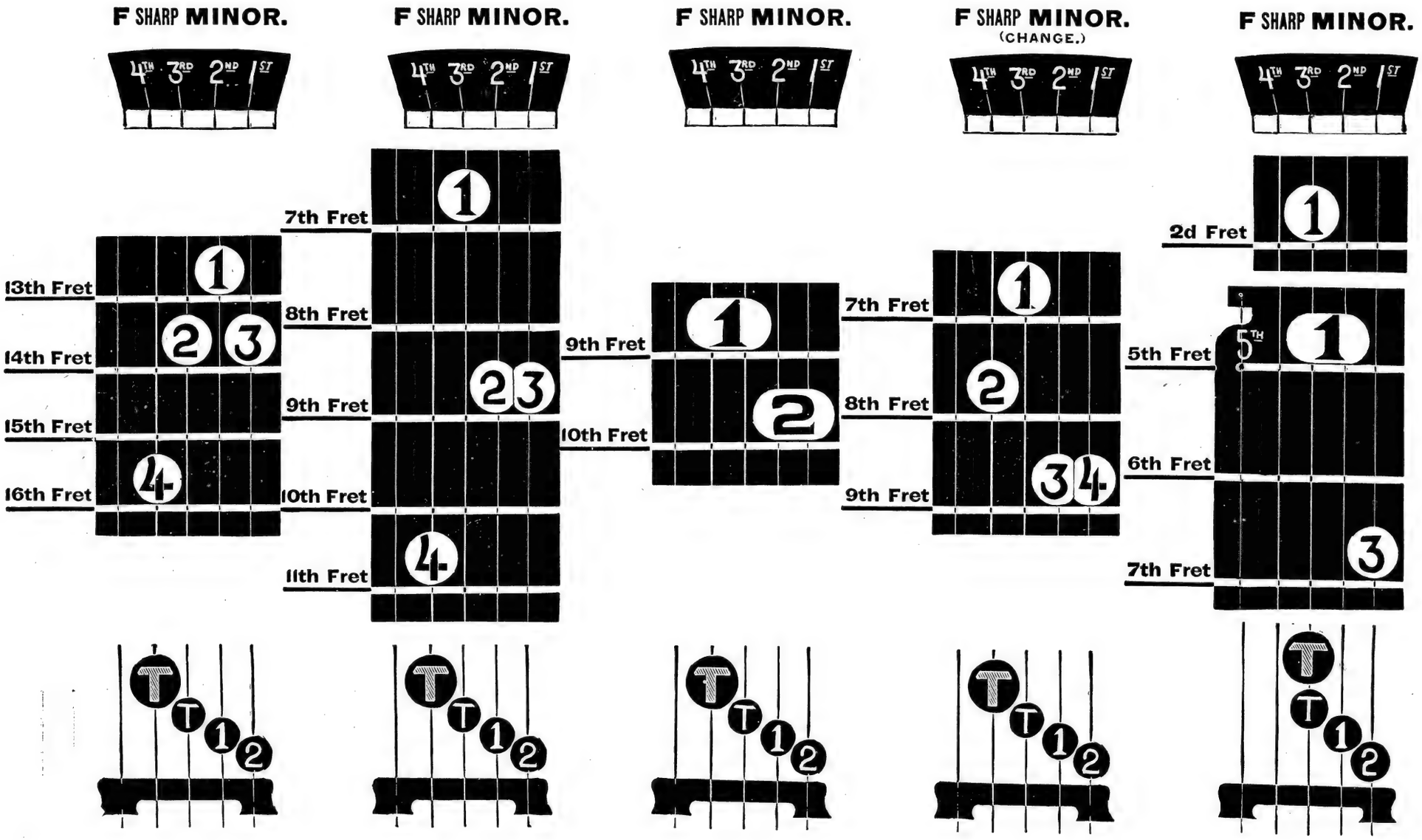

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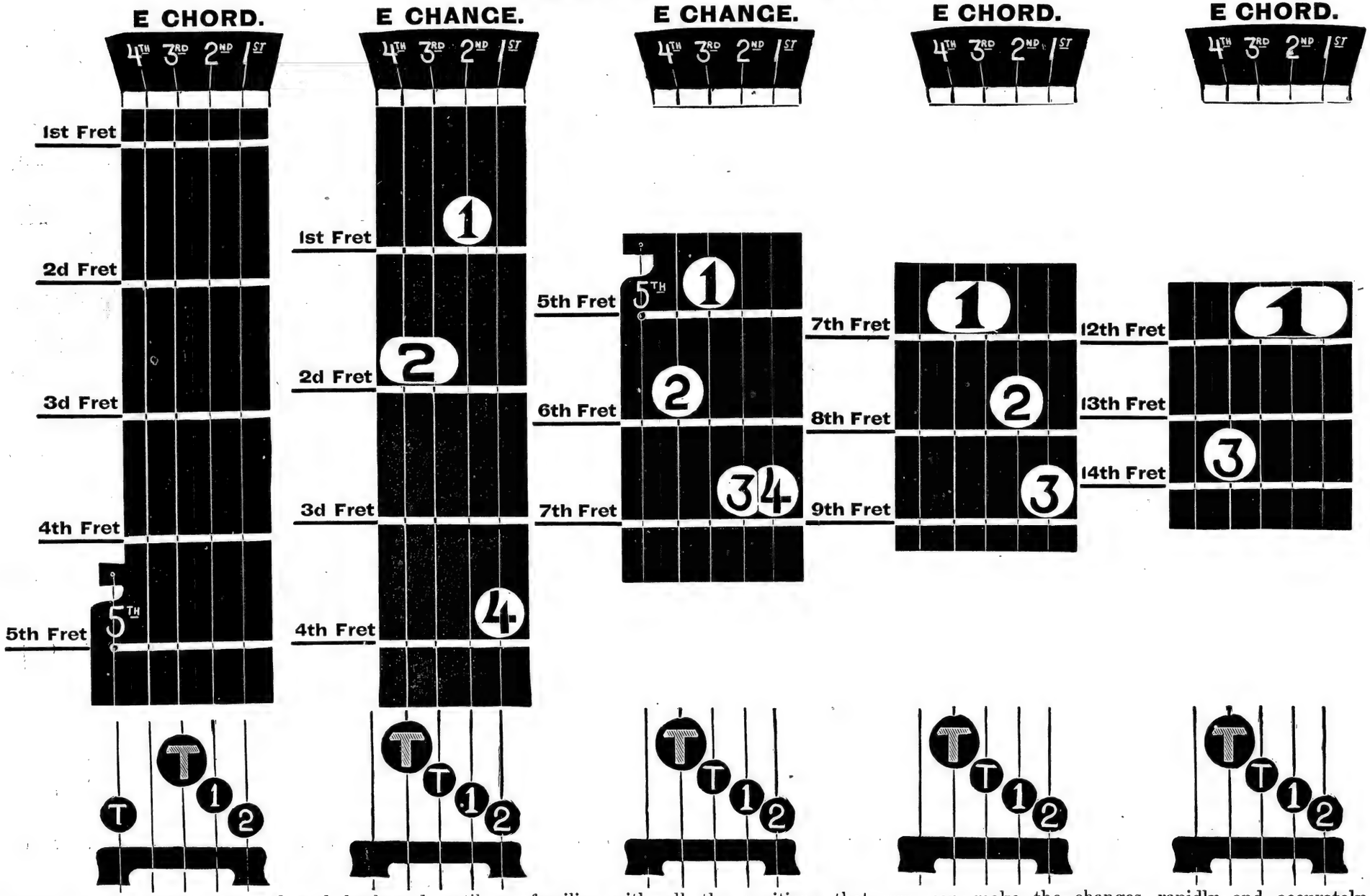

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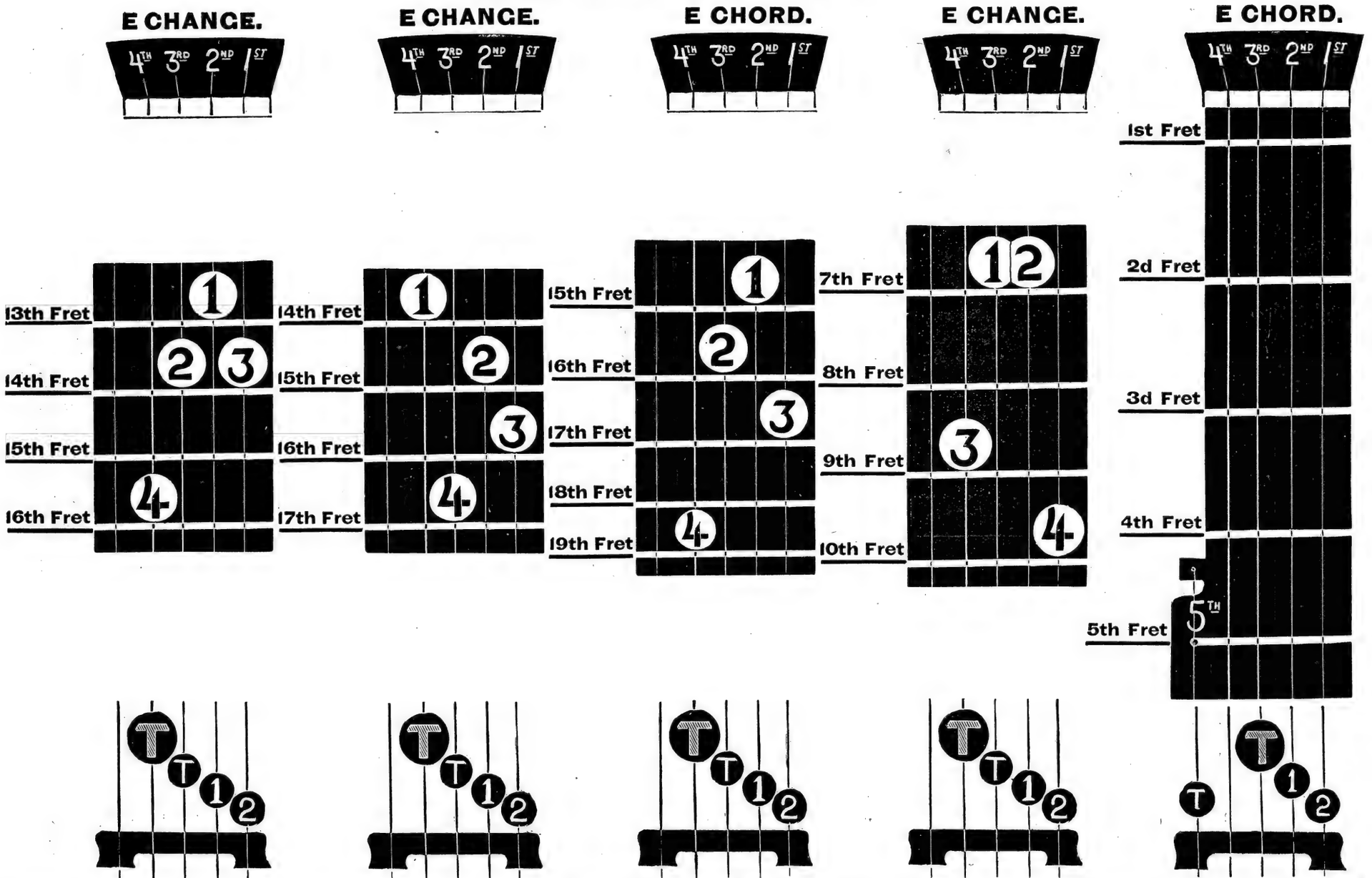

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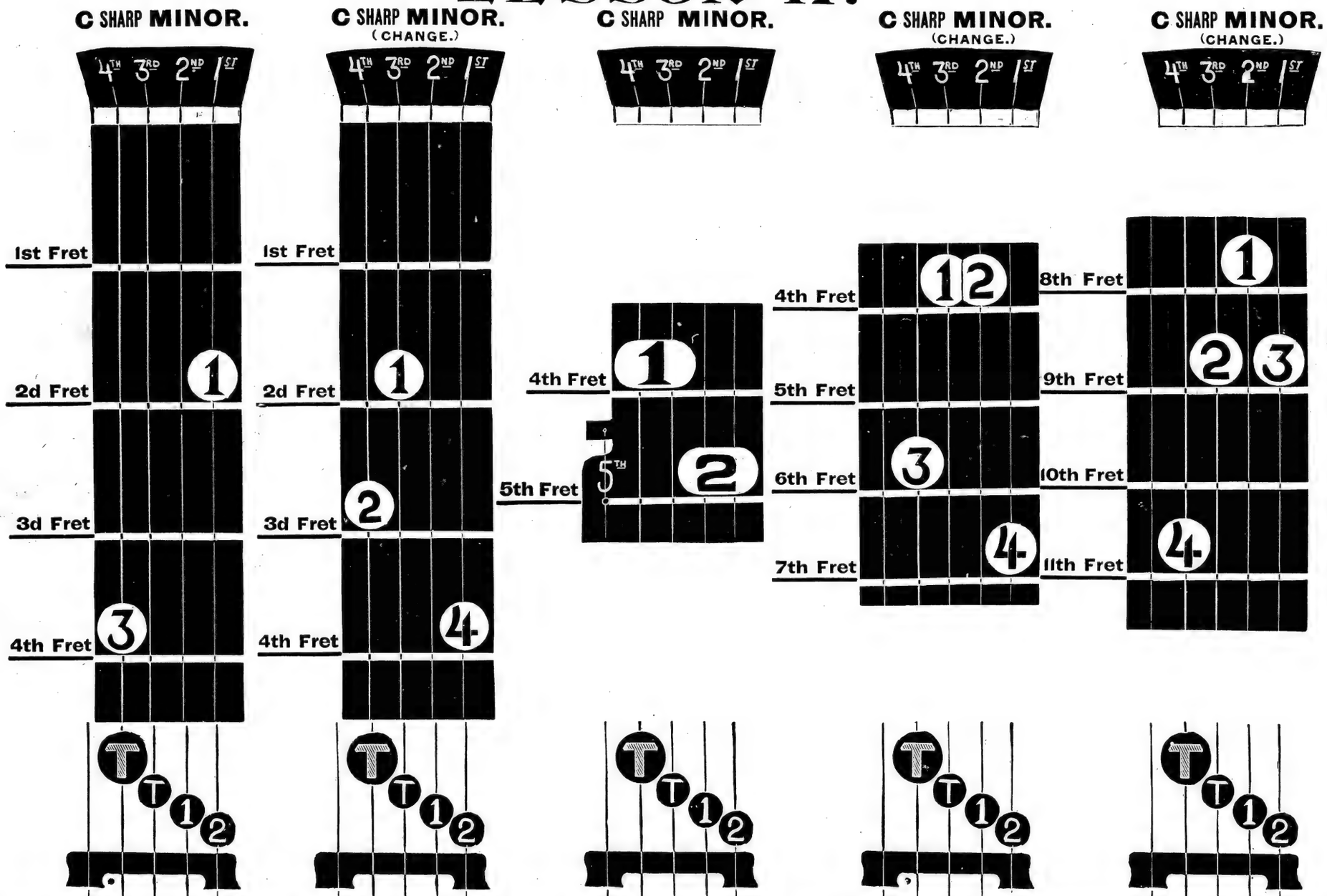

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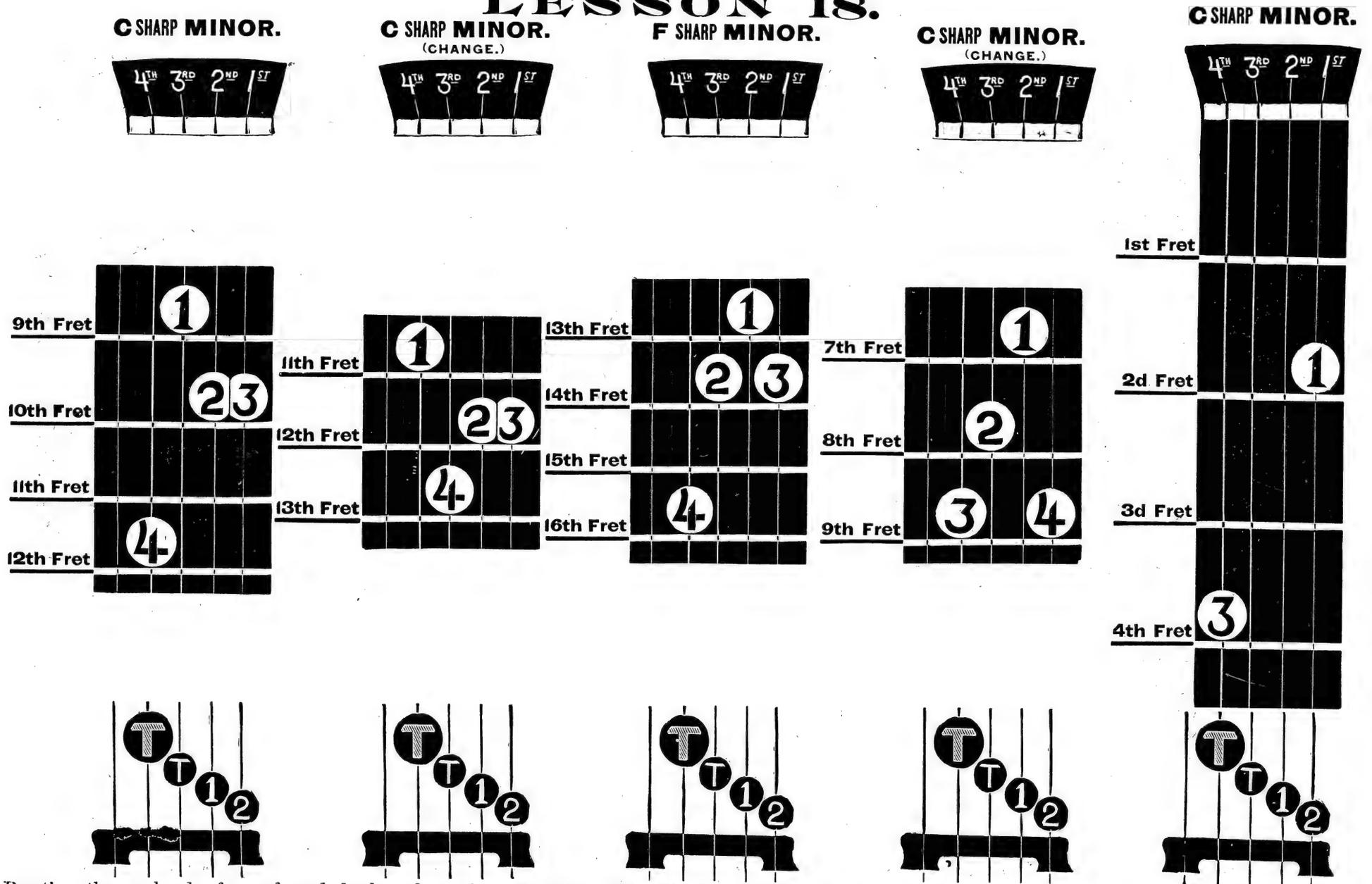

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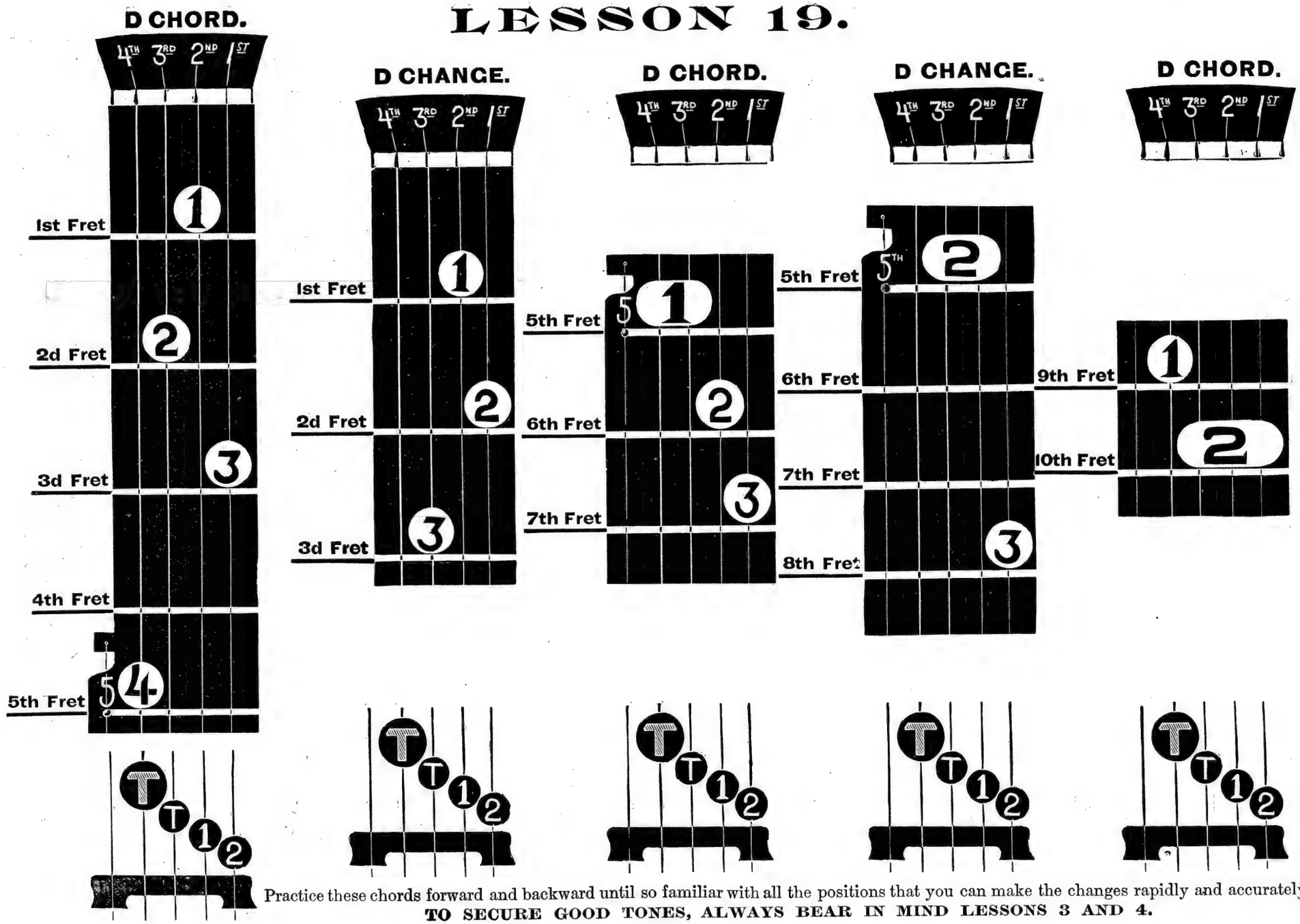

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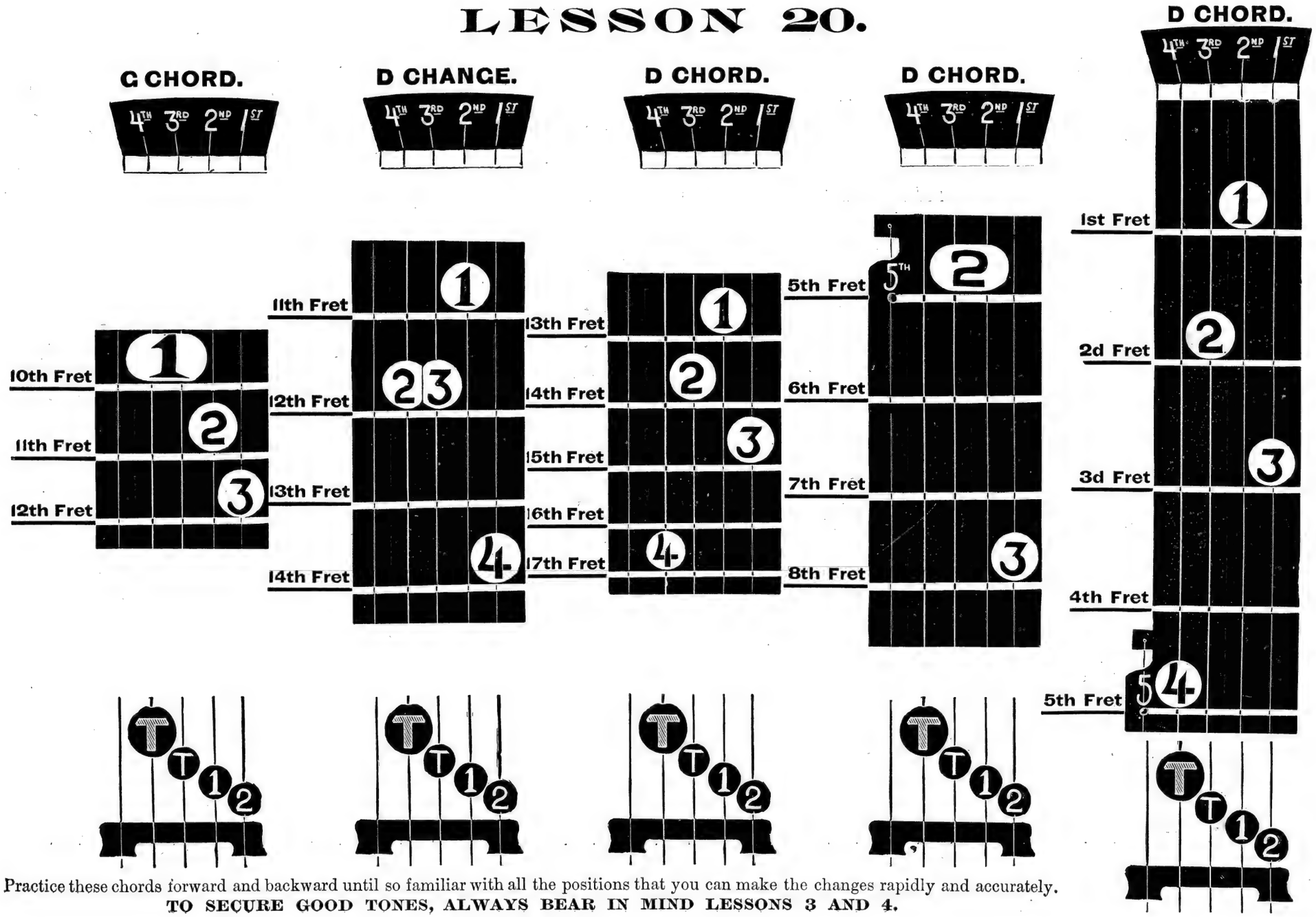

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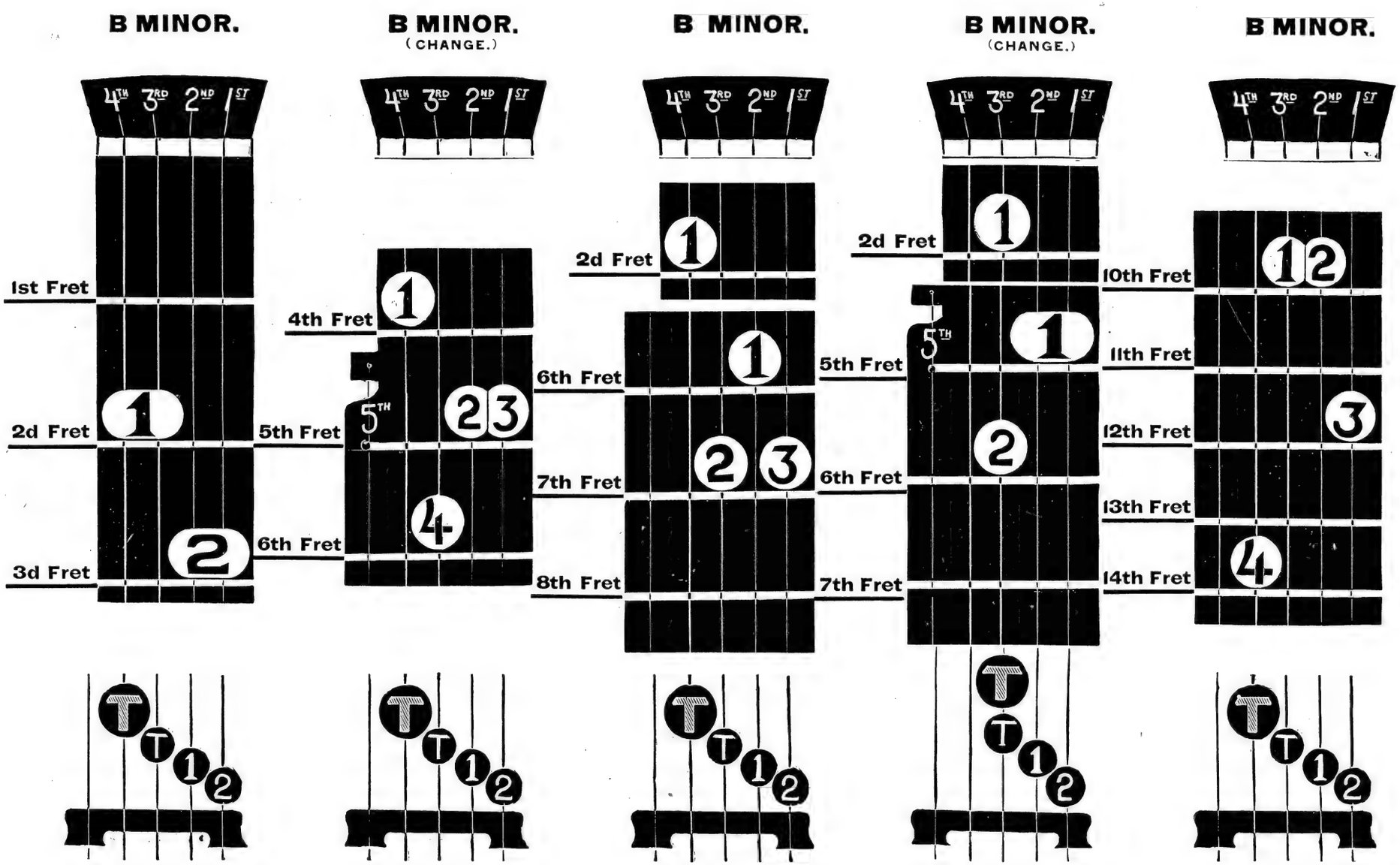

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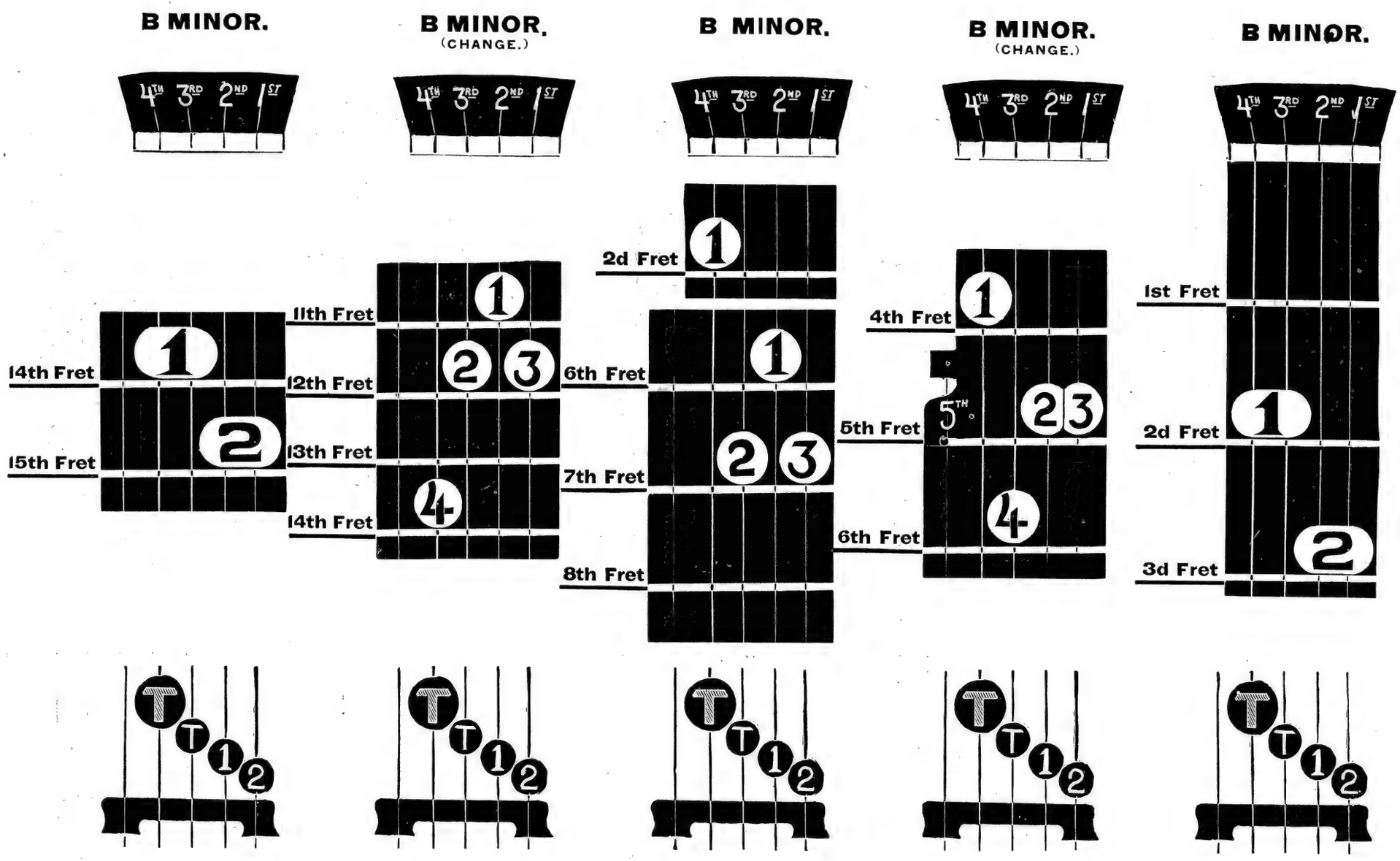

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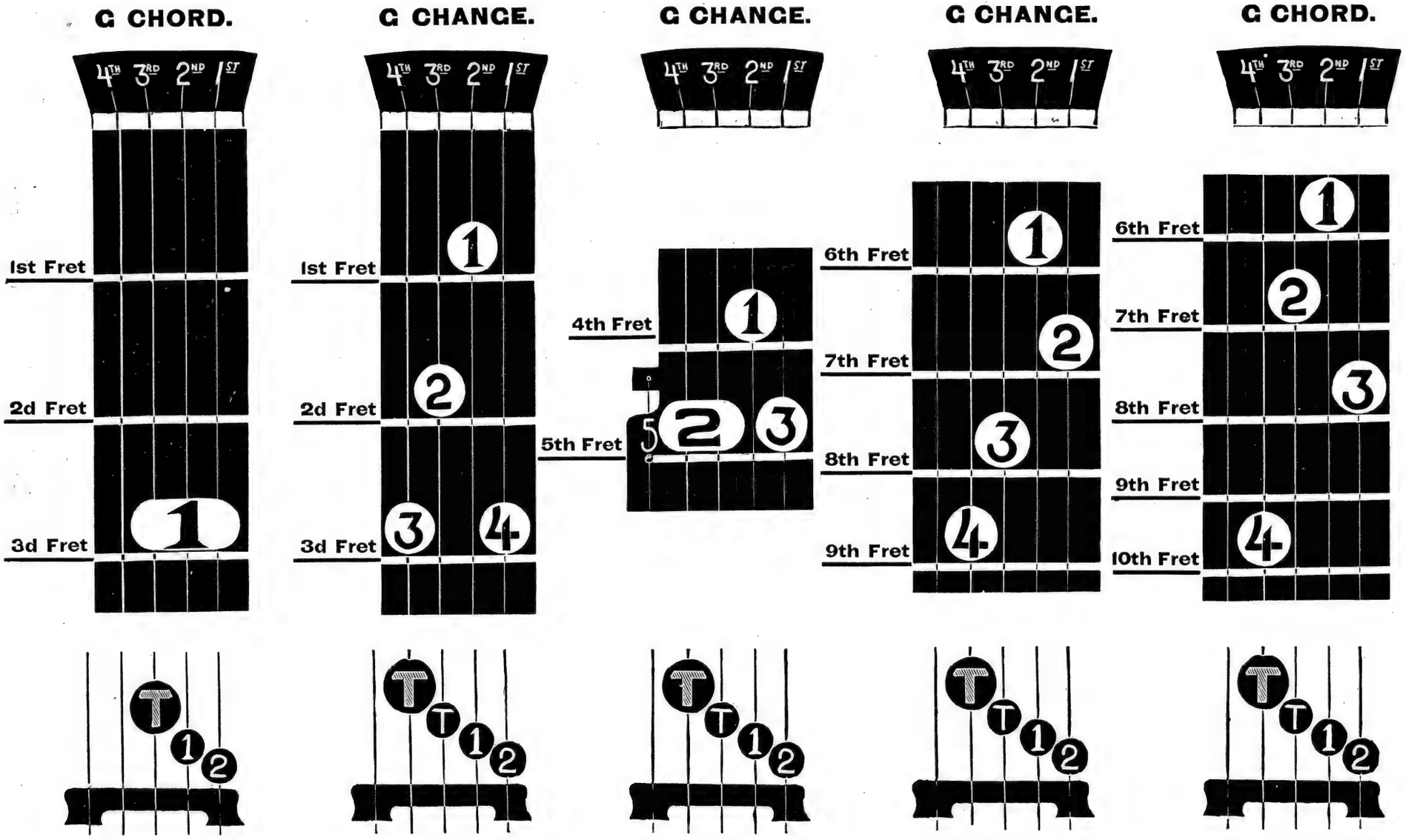

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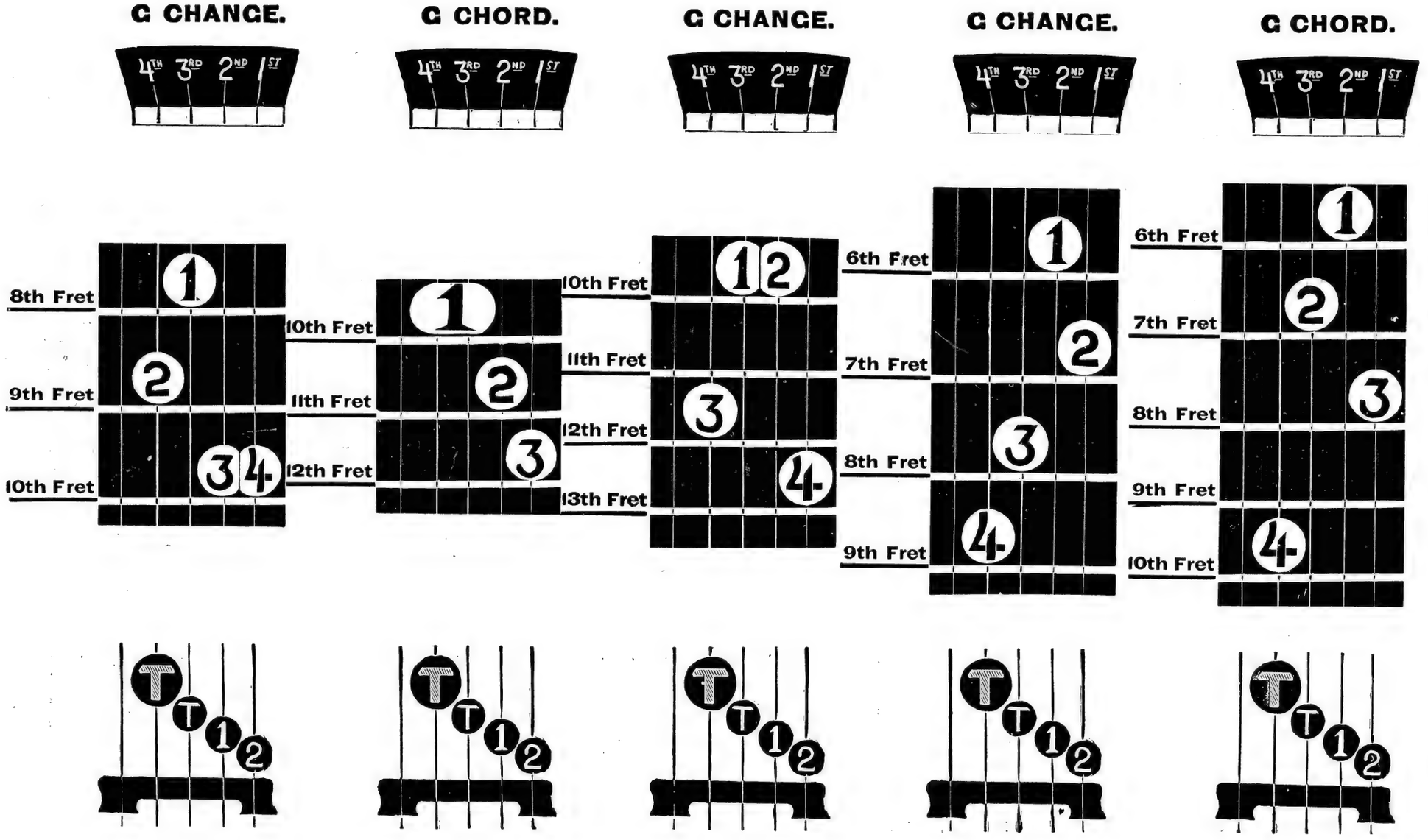

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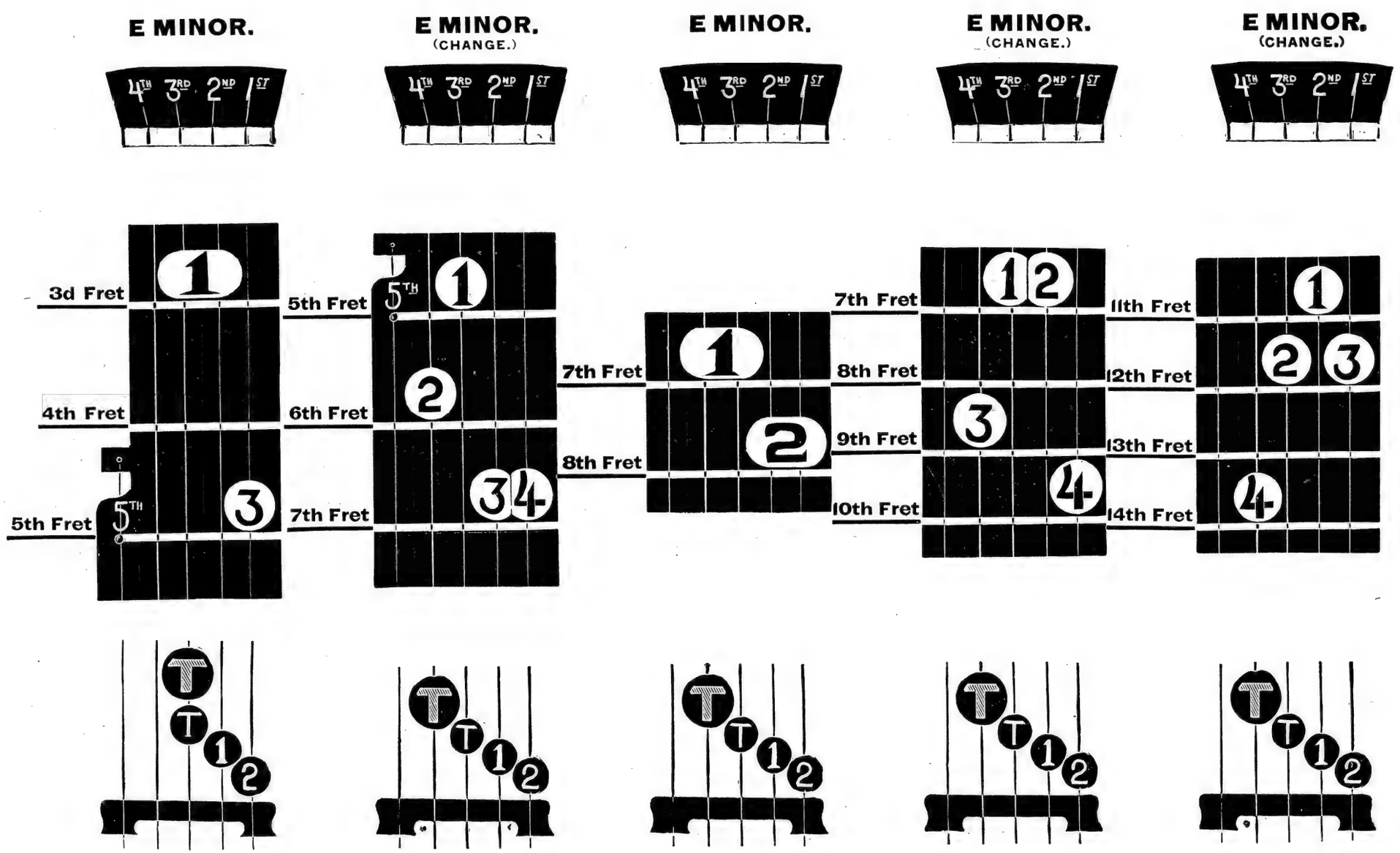

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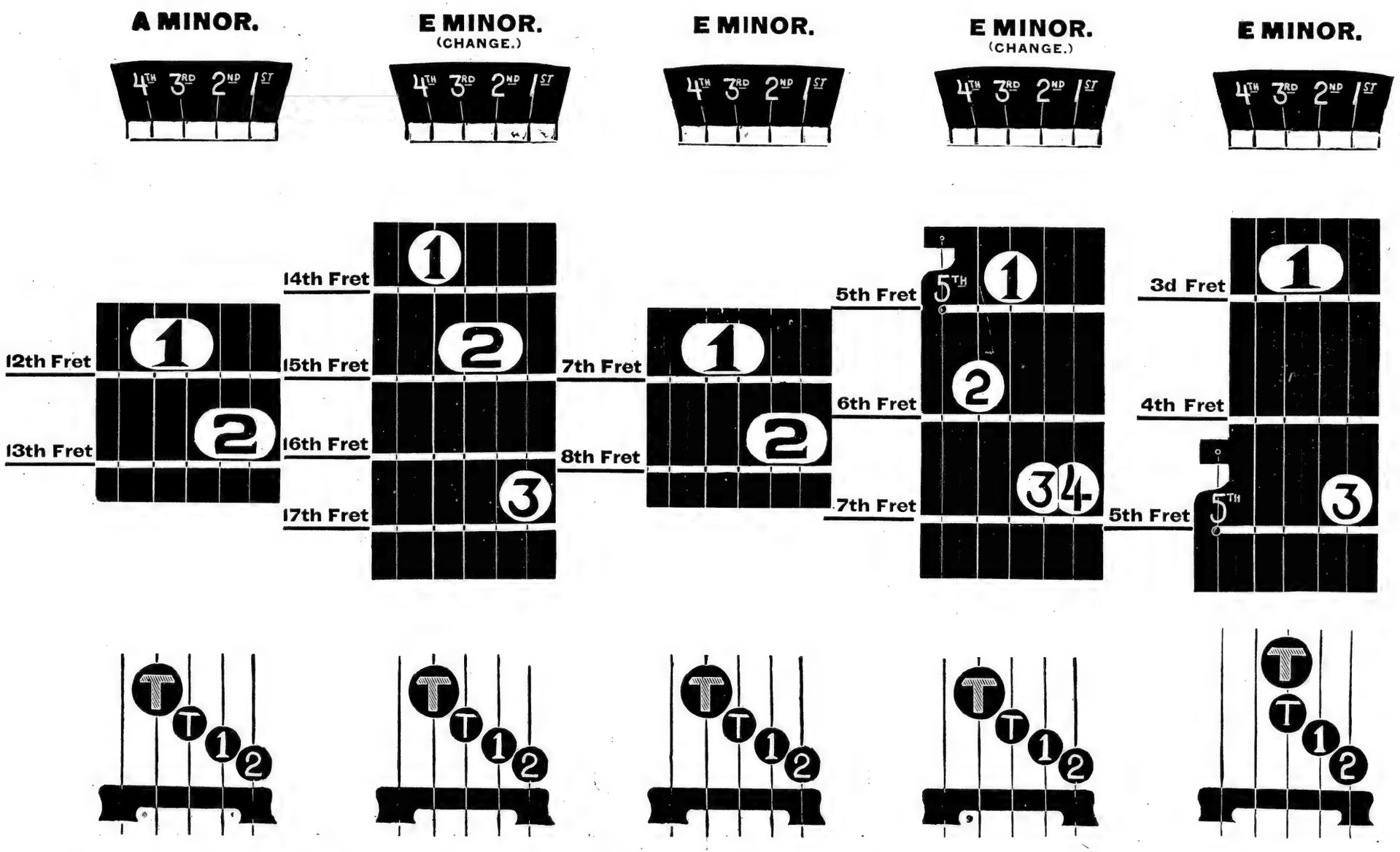

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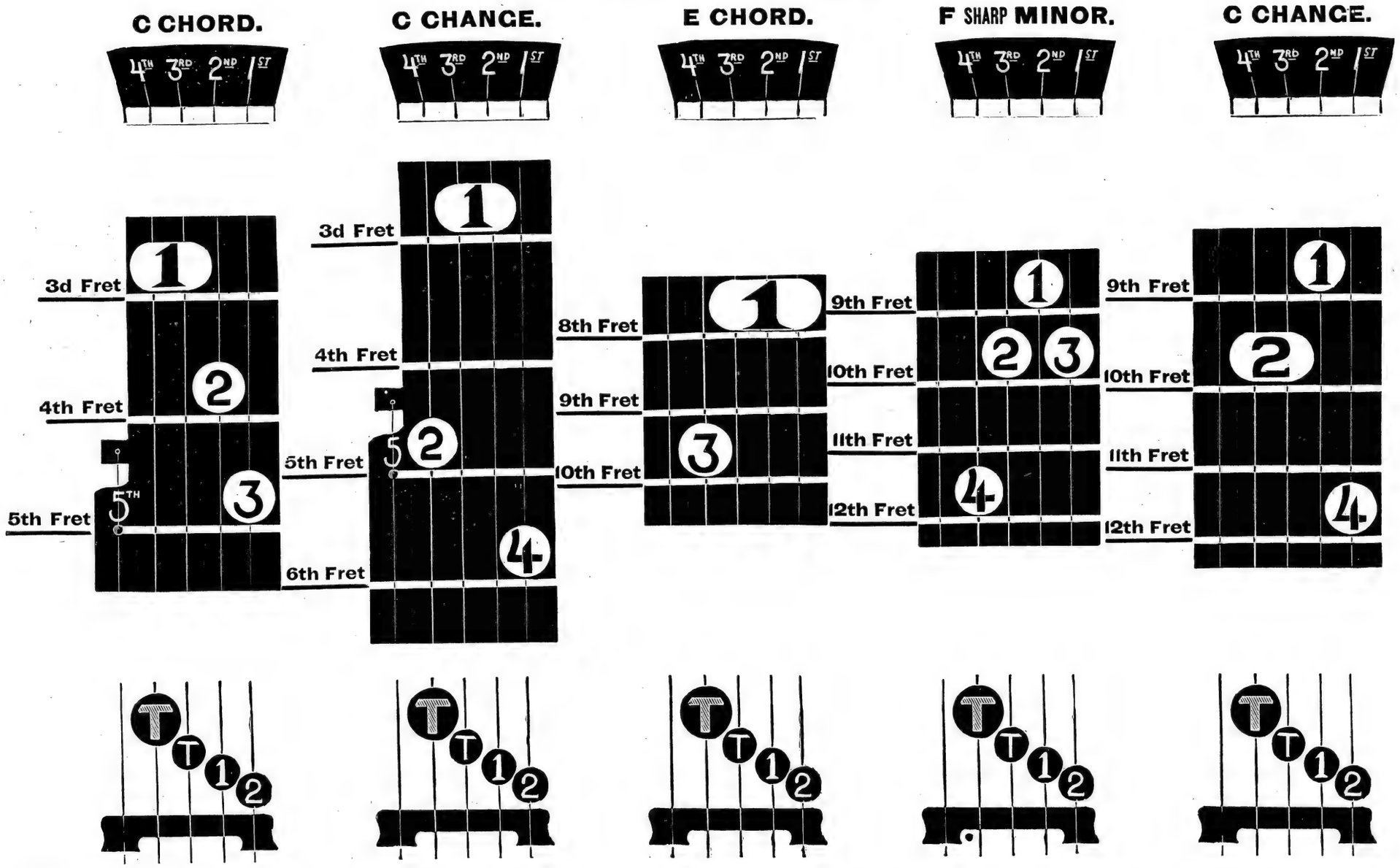

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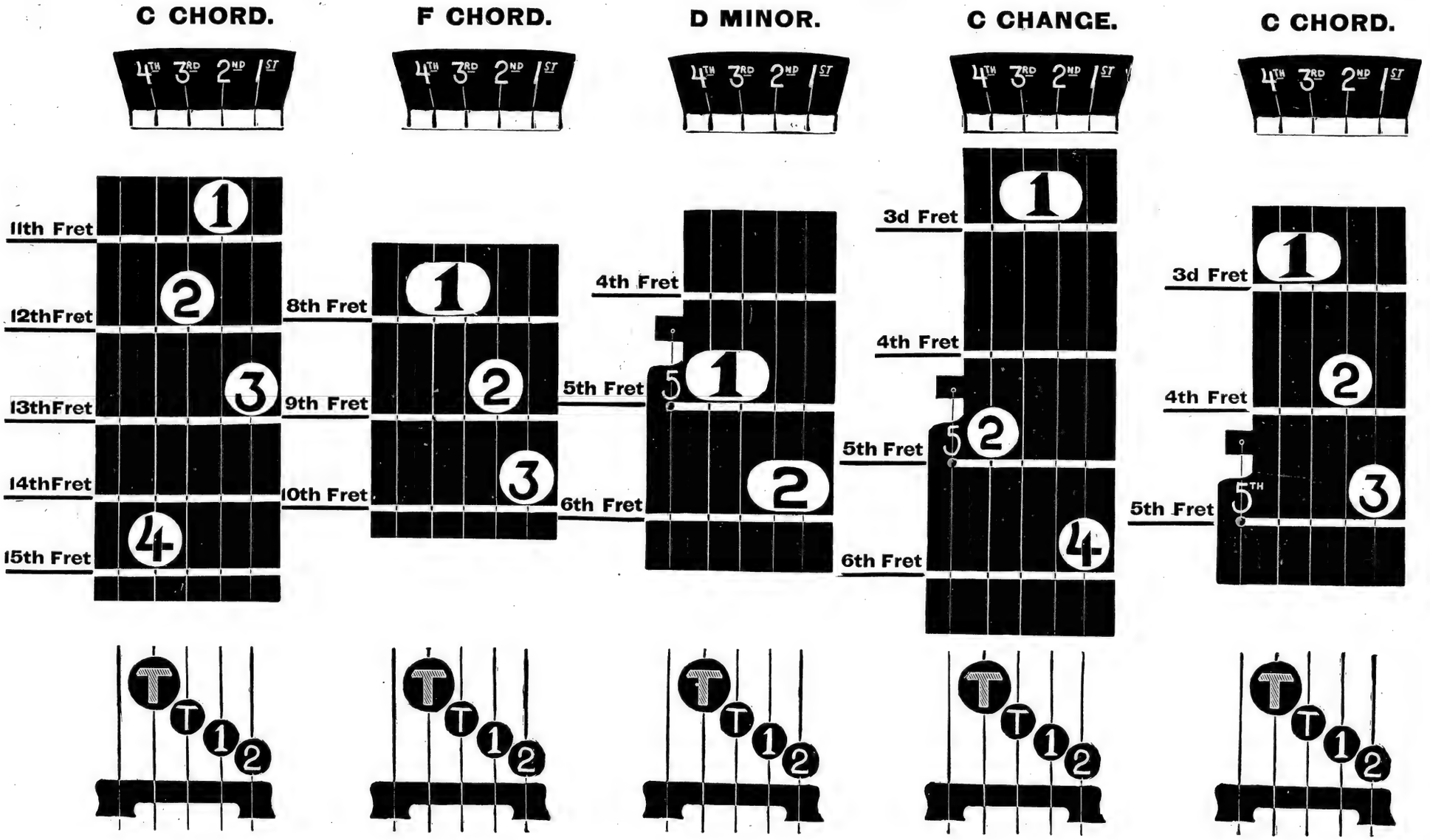

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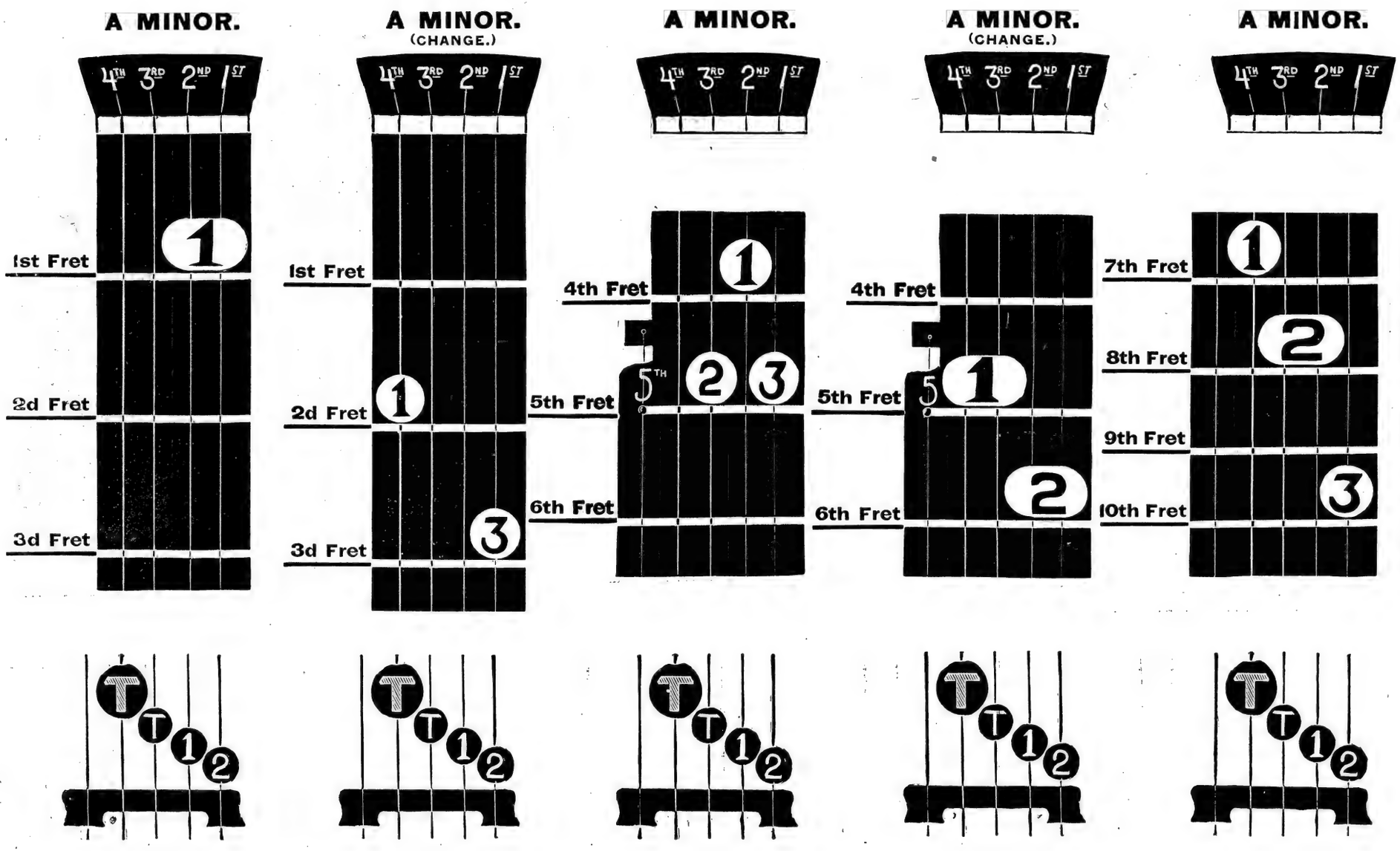

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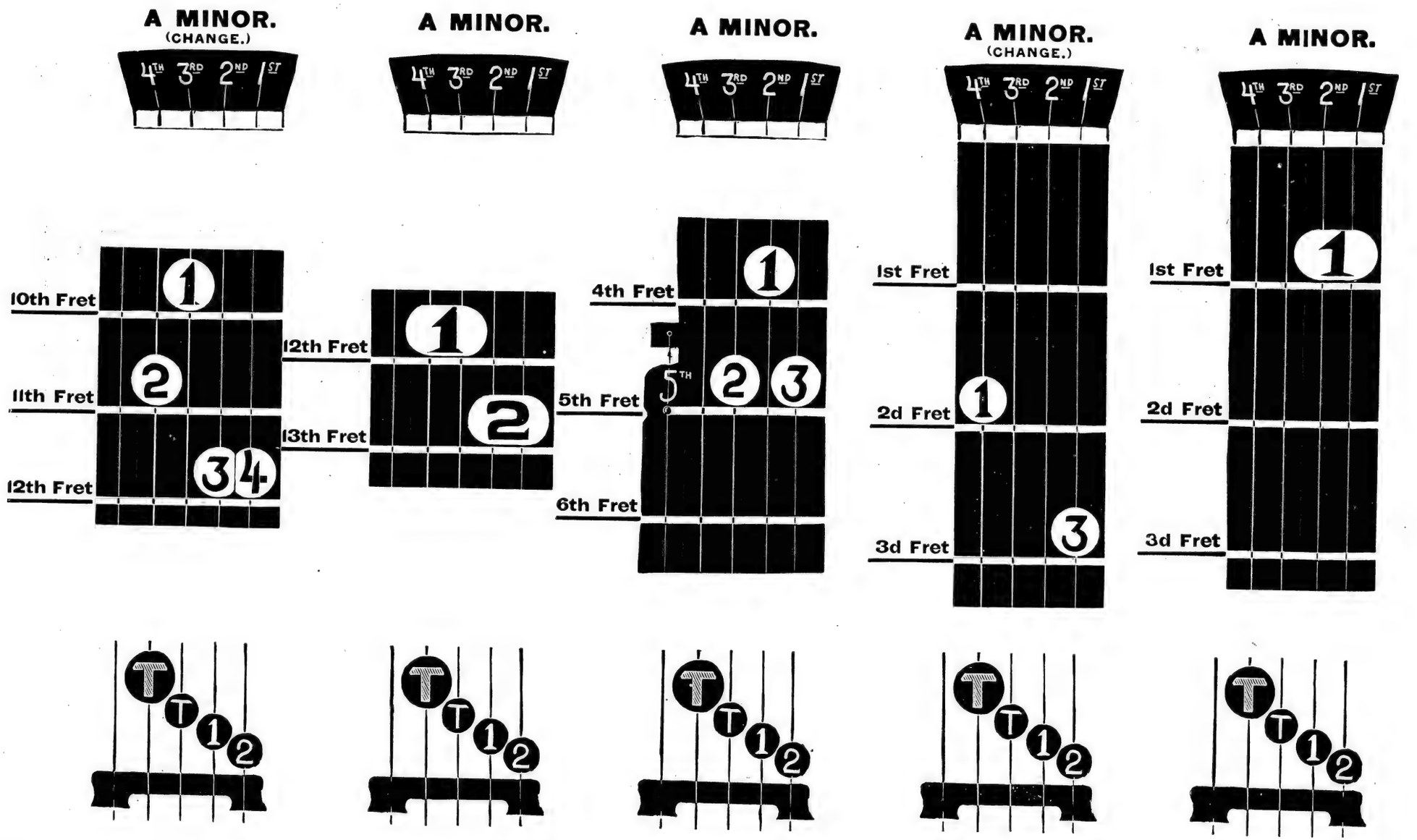

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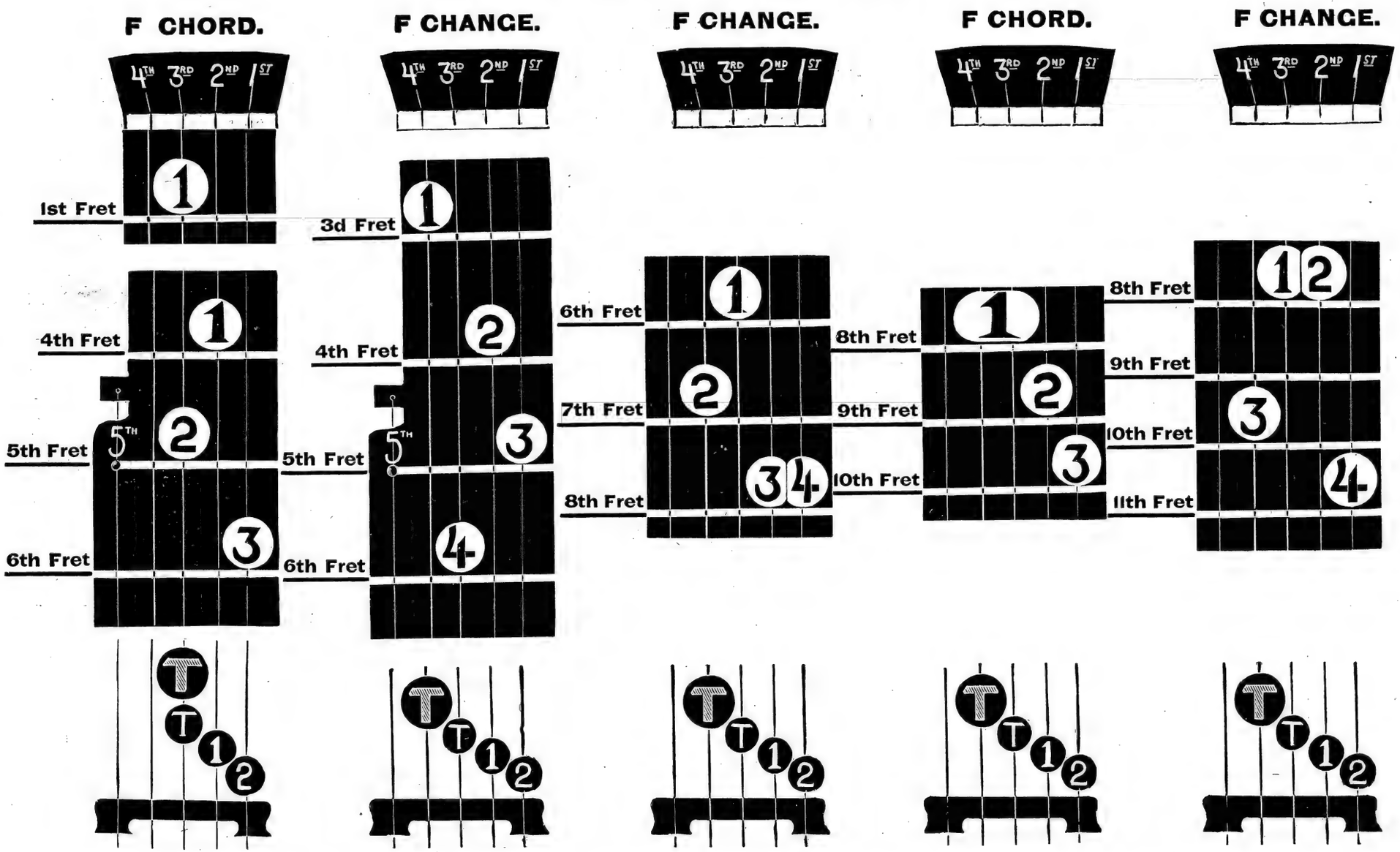
LESSON 31.



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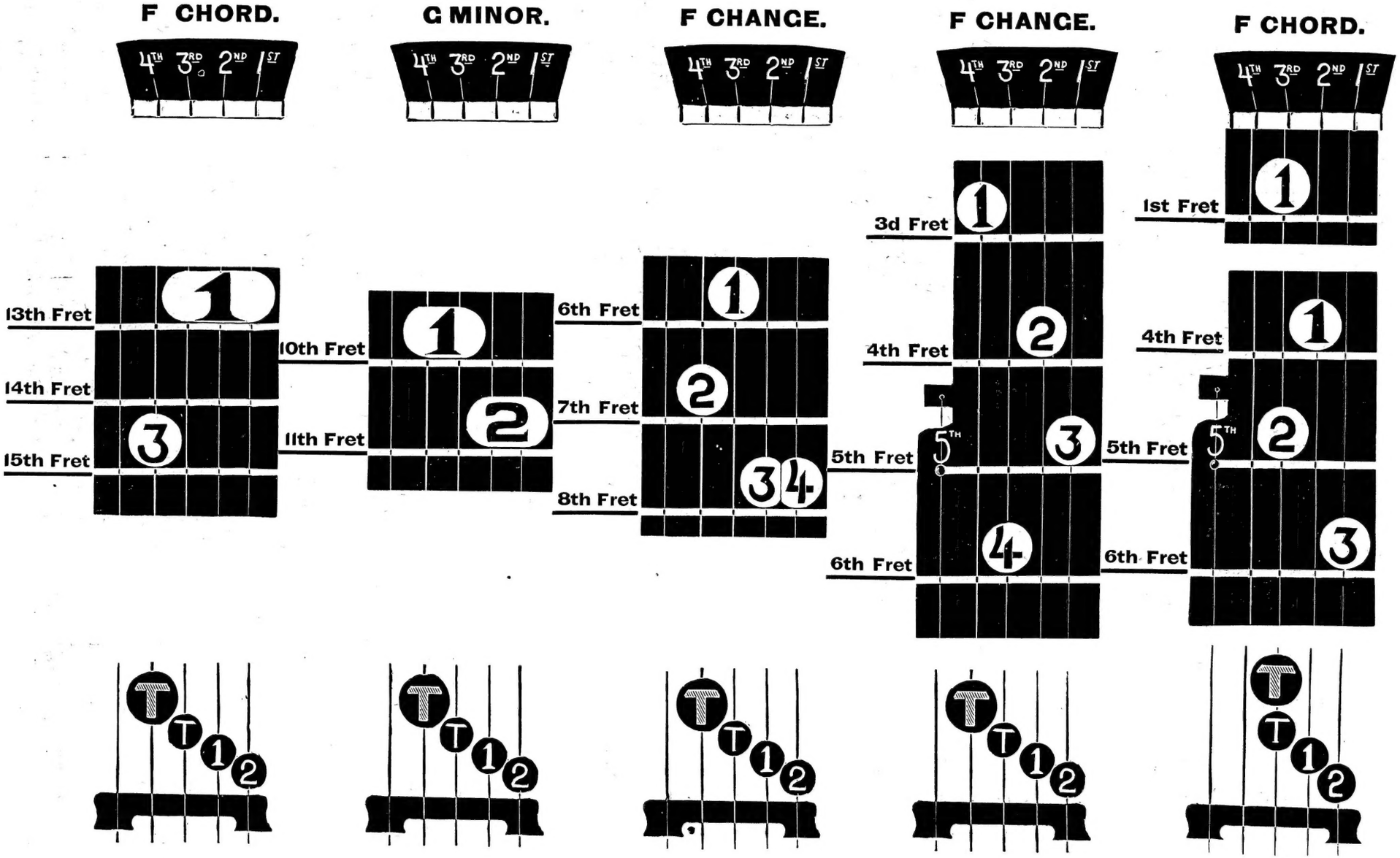

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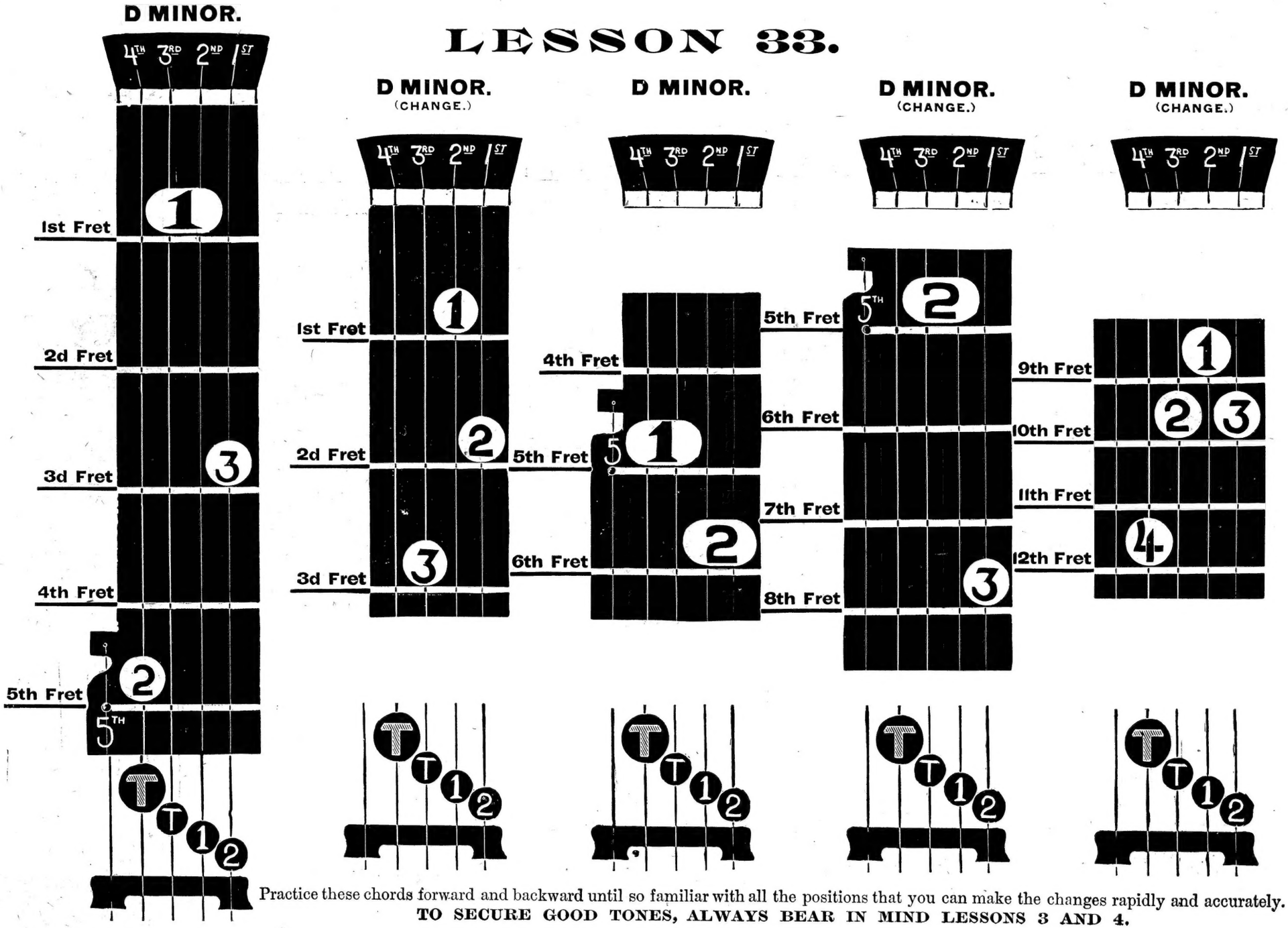

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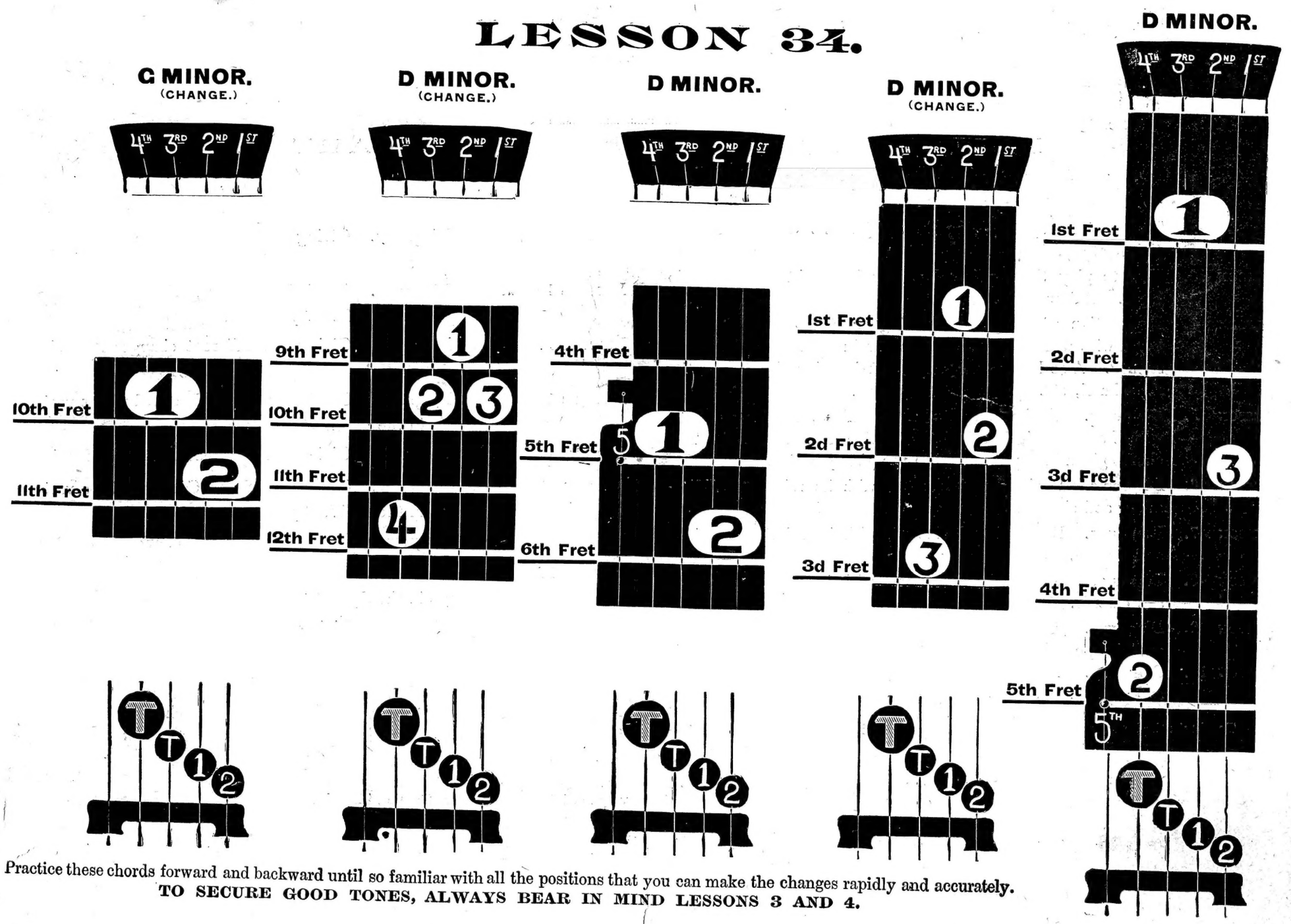

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Analysis of Contents.

PART 1.

LESSON 1. What is the Banjo? What is the Banjo used for? Rules for adjustment. General Rules.

LESSON 2. The proper way to string the Banjo. To tune the Banjo. (Illustrated).

LESSON 3. How to play the Banjo. Left hand. Right hand. Banjo Style. Guitar Style.

LESSON 4. Explanation of Diagrams, showing upper section of finger-board with work for the left hand, and numbers and letters of strings. Also lower section of finger-board with work for the right hand, etc. General Instructions.

LESSON 5. Diagrams. A chord, and change. Also, F sharp minor, with change; this is called the relative to the A chord. The chords given in part 1 are all in the *first position*.

LESSON 6. Diagrams. E chord and change, with its relative C sharp minor and change.

LESSON 7. Diagrams, D chord and change, with its relative B minor and change.

LESSON 8. Diagrams. G chord and change, with its relative E minor and change.

LESSON 9. Diagrams. C chord and change, with its relative A minor and change.

LESSON 10. Diagrams. F chord and change, with its relative D minor and change.

To obtain the best results and add interest to these lessons the student should *combine* the chords in his practice. For instance: When practicing the D chord, Lesson 7, with its relative minor, very satisfactory results will be attained by making the change to the A chord, Lesson 5, with its relative minor. These examples will apply to similar combinations throughout Parts 1 and 2 of this Instructor.

PART 2.

LESSONS 11 and 12. Diagrams. Consisting of the A chord with a variety of changes in the *different positions*.

LESSONS 13 and 14. Diagrams. Giving the different changes in F sharp minor.

LESSONS 15 and 16. Diagrams. Consisting of the E chord with a variety of changes in the *different positions*.

LESSONS 17 and 18. Diagrams. Giving the different changes in C sharp minor.

LESSONS 19 and 20. Diagrams. Consisting of the D chord with a variety of changes in the *different positions*.

LESSONS 21 and 22. Diagrams. Giving the different changes in B minor.

LESSONS 23 and 24. Diagrams. Consisting of the G chord with a variety of changes in the *different positions*.

LESSONS 25 and 26. Diagrams. Giving the different changes in E minor.

LESSONS 27 and 28. Diagrams. Consisting of the C chord with a variety of changes in the *different positions*.

LESSONS 29 and 30. Diagrams. Giving the different changes in A minor.

LESSONS 31 and 32. Diagrams. Consisting of the F chord with a variety of changes in the *different positions*.

LESSONS 33 and 34. Diagrams. Giving the different changes in D minor.

Finally, the author wishes to impress upon the mind of the student the great value of playing the different chords, with their relative minors as given in this Part, *interchanging the chords at will;* the *possibilities* of the Banjo will be brought out by this method, and a very much higher character of music will be developed.